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SELIMA,
OR THE
VILLAGE TALE;

A
NOVEL,
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF
FANNY.

VOL. IV.

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LETTER CXIX.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

MY eagerness to talk to you of the blessed change which kind fortune has wrought in my situation, surpasses all bounds, and will no longer submit to restrictions, which I feel myself well assured are unnecessary.

You know that Mrs. Leslie is restored to me—that dear, that amiable, generous, compassionate—but how poor is language, when applied to the description of her worth, or my regard! To you too, my beloved Julia, whose charitable hand fortunately extended, at the

most critical juncture, was the first instrument of Divine Mercy, in the renewal of life, friends, subsistence, and comfort, to the perishing Selima, owe I not the most unbounded gratitude, esteem, and love?

Alas ! am I ever to bewail the instability of human happiness ? Your letter, addressed to Mrs. Leslie, is just arrived. Let me conjure you not to suffer any needless apprehensions on my account, to aggravate those excited by a cause so much more momentous and important. Gracious Heaven preserve to you a parent, with whose tenderness you have been so lately blessed ! or should it be the Divine Will to deprive you of a comfort, which yet you can scarcely know how to estimate, may it supply you with strength and fortitude to meet the stroke without repining.

It is now two days since my revered friend removed me from the miserable place in which she found me, to her
own

own elegant apartments. From a comparative view of present appearances with those to which, through many cheerless months, I have been accustomed, I am almost ready to imagine myself a little princess. Indeed, were it not for some indelible regrets, there would be very few, however exalted their situations, who might not look down with envy on my felicity. But, my Julia, do you think that the idea of the beloved friend, who is lost to me for ever, can be totally eradicated by the affectionate kindness of her whom I have regained? No, no, my friend, it is too deeply engraven on my heart for time itself, though it may soften, ever to efface the impression; nor is the ghastly image of the noble-minded young man, whose life fell a sacrifice to his benevolence, often absent from my imagination, or insufficient in itself to teach me, that uninterrupted bliss is not attainable in this state of imperfection. But Heaven guard me from
the

the ingratitude of one murmuring sensation, at a crisis when its gracious mercies are teeming on my unworthy head! O! my Julia, what a reverse of fortune has a very short time exemplified in me, who but three days ago was perishing for want of the commonest necessaries of life, and am now possessed of no less than an income of five hundred pounds per annum! such is the munificence of Mrs. Leslie. This very day has she presented to me a moiety of that sum, which she purposes immediately to secure to me for the term of her life, having no further disposal of her estates, unless a law suit, now pending, happens to be decided in her favour. This however is a misfortune, which I trust it will not be my fate to deplore.

As for wealth, were not a fifth part of so noble a provision, sheltered as I shall be under the hospitable roof of my benefactress, sufficient to gratify the most extravagant wishes of my heart, they
would

would scarcely deserve to be indulged. Mrs. Leslie endeavours to rally me out of the gravity of such ideas, which she says is owing only to the recency of my afflictions, that time will not fail to restore the volatility of my disposition, and that she despairs not of seeing me enjoy the better part of my present fortune, without wishing me to neglect a provisor against the possible contingencies of futurity. At the same time, she deprives me of the most rational method of appropriating a part of her bounty, by never suffering indigence to pass her observation unrelieved. Old Catherine is comfortably provided for; and poor Mary is already here; and as, by the order of my benefactress, I am to have a male and female attendant, is to continue with me in the capacity of a servant, but her salary will proceed from the same source.

When I wrote last, my state was miserable beyond description, though not arrived

arrived at that extremity, to which it was destined to be reduced. But my dear protectress begins to chide me for trespassing on her indulgence ; therefore farewell my Julia till tomorrow.

SELIMA IN CONTINUATION.

THE languor, which, from fasting and anxiety had taken possession of me, when I addressed you for the last time from the house of the poor deceased Mrs. Craven, was too uncontroulable to be concealed. Happily the knowledge of it did not reach you, till you were enabled to bear a part in the concern, which you thought you had the power to relieve ;—Generous — affectionate girl—surely, notwithstanding the harsh decrees of fate, to which I have occasionally been subjected, no poor deserted orphan like myself was ever blessed with so many excellent friends as I have been. But to return to that short, but eventful, period

period of my chequered history, with which you yet are unacquainted; Mrs. Craven's brother and sister inherited all her worldly goods, but not any of her benignity of heart.

Instead of paying me the little legacy, which, according to her promise in their presence, I have not the smallest doubt but she bequeathed me—they made me pay to the utmost farthing, what was due to them for my lodging, without excepting even the last night that I remained there, when a broken easy chair was the only substitute for a bed, which was left to rest upon; but I should gladly have thrown myself upon the floor, to have postponed a removal, which with great reason I trembled to encounter.

From the time of my old friend's death, Catherine, though she still continued to sleep in the house, had her meals given her by a person in a neighbouring street; a circumstance in which I rejoiced, not only on her own account,
but

but as it prevented her observing the scantiness of mine. This good creature had undertaken the settling of my future plans, and had done every thing she could to render them comfortable as possible, before she went to her new service : but alas ! she was ignorant of the extremity of poverty to which I was reduced. The reason of her engaging a garret for me in a street so remote from that which we were about to quit, was its vicinity to those people from whom I might most probably obtain employment, and my inability to walk far in search of it ; besides some trifling knowledge of the person to whom it belonged.

Catherine waited on her new master on Sunday ; and on the day following, about noon, I undertook my melancholy journey, with only one poor half-crown remaining in my pocket, and without any friendly arm to yield me that support which I most truly wanted.

I believe

I believe my ignorance of the town prolonged my walk, and I suffered many impertinencies in the course of it, which did not tend to facilitate my progress. At length, however,

“ With fainting steps and slow”—

I reached the end of it, and throwing myself on a leathern seat which luckily stood ready to receive me, breathless, and with so little command of speech that it was some minutes before I could articulate a reply to the ungentle interrogations with which I was addressed.—O! Julia, how will your heart bleed for me, though the misery is past, when I tell you, that three shillings and sixpence, the weekly rent of the room, which had been engaged for me, was demanded in advance, before I could be permitted to take possession of it.

“ Indeed!” exclaimed I faintly, “ I have but this half-crown in the world; if you will accept of it in part, I will

try to get some work tomorrow, and pay you the remainder honestly. I would not defraud any one, but it is very hard to perish with cold and hunger in the street."

"O! to be sure," returned the mistress of the house, "but it would be a fine deal harder, I believe, for me, to keep all the beggars brats that comes here with a whining story in their mouths. The room is fit for a more decenter person, let me tell you: a good feather-bed and stuff hangings to boot: sich a trull as you would bring it into an ill name; why I should not mind if I lied in it myself for a time and away. Come, come, get about your busins, you are no better than you should be, I can tell by your looks."

And I had laid my hand upon the counter to raise me from my seat, in order to obey this cruel mandate, when her husband graciously condescended to take my part.

"Come

"Come vench," said he, "do not turn th' poor wretch out o' doors, take th' half crown, and let her have the lad's bed at vonce, he may sleep with Timothy."

"Vell, I care not," cried his wife, "come along then, and I will shew you the vay."

I hesitated not to crawl after her as well as I was able, with a sensation of gratitude for this remission of inhumanity, no less sincere than what true beneficence could have excited, but of a nature very different.

No sooner was I conducted to a chamber at the top of the house, already described to you by Mrs. Leslie, than I availed myself of the opportunity to rest my wearied limbs, and I cannot say the night was entirely passed without some intervals of sleep, but they were of short duration, and interrupted by the most terrifying visions, so that the morning found me little recruited in spirits, and

still weaker in body than I was the day before ; which is not surprizing, on considering the hurry and fatigue I had undergone, supported only by the trifling nourishment of bread and water. It was with great difficulty that I performed the task of getting on my clothes, yet, when it was completed, I made an effort to walk to the mercer's, in hopes of procuring an engagement, which it was not possible for me to have performed, but it was, as it were, a last struggle for existence, which I now know is of consequence even to the most unhappy : but it was in vain ; on the second or third step I dropped almost lifeless, and a hard-hearted woman, hearing a noise upon the stairs, opened the door and scolded me for disturbing her child ; but I supplicated her compassion, and at last she was kind enough to fetch me a draught of water, which revived me, insomuch that I tottered back to the only asylum, wretched as it was, which the whole

whole world would then afford to one of the humblest of its creatures. From this time I have but a confused recollection of my own feelings, till the great chain of fortunate events first set in motion by your letter, and perfected by the indefatigable care of that revered friend, who has restored to me every blessing which was left for me to enjoy.

My dear Julia, I fear I have been relating to you this dismal tale at a very improper time. Lay it aside if your mind is not able to endure it without shrinking. I would not have troubled you with a repetition of past griefs, but I thought you would be displeased by the omission, having always taken such an affectionate interest in the most trivial occurrences of my life.

I hope I shall hear from you long before this can arrive at Westburne-lodge. There is no describing the anxiety I feel for the recovery of one on whom your felicity so imminently depends.

Once more I conjure you not to suffer any fears for me to aggravate your concern; for, to borrow an expression from an old nurse, I begin to *pick up my crumbs*, and recover my strength already; advantages which have not been a little promoted by taking the air daily, with Mrs. Leslie by my side. She is now acquainted with every thing that has happened to me since our separation, and, to my great astonishment, attributes all my sufferings to the deceit and jealousy of Mrs. Woodley. If the conjecture should be well founded—what—but I will still hope it is impossible.

That Mrs. Leslie's letter, in quest of the poor fugitive, remained unanswered, is easily to be accounted for by its date, which marked, I think, the very time when you were under the violent displeasure of your step-mother.

The carriage is at the door. Yours,
unalterably,

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S.

P. S. I have ventured to enclose, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, your fortunate remittance, for which I have no longer occasion ; and may no miserable orphan, distressed as I have been, ever know the want of so inestimable a friend. Do not be surprized at the black cement of this letter, which is correspondent with my present dress : my surviving kind benefactress is not offended by this poor external testimony of a grieved heart, for the loss of that dear departed saint, for whom she as truly mourns, or for that lamented stranger, who sacrificed his life to preserve mine from infamy and ruin.

LETTER

LETTER CXX.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

MY beloved Selima, I tremble at the infinitude of joy that rushes in upon my soul. The fear that my present happiness is too exquisite to be permanent, is a check upon the consolation of my heart, whose greatest merit is a disposition

“ To make the peace of all it loves

“ The basis of its own.”

My father recovers fast in spirits as well as in health, and can now happily review an event which has deprived him of a worthless woman, with the indifference

ference it deserves : a state of mind which, before his illness, I utterly despaired of his attaining.

Often have I expressed an opinion that our destinies have been closely interwoven ; and has not almost every incident of our lives served to validate the supposition ? Yet, notwithstanding the participation with which my fate indulges me in your felicity, I am half angry at your reception of the returning guest, who, in spite of her caprice, has surely charms enough to secure to her a gracious welcome whenever she appears. Fie ! Selima, is this a moment for a sad heart or even for the outward

“ Trappings or the suits of woe ? ”

Only reason with yourself, and you will candidly acknowledge, that suffering your mind to dwell principally on those blessings which are irretrievable, favour strongly of ingratitude for those merciful dispensations which you are permitted

ted to enjoy. You want not surely to be reminded, that the cup of happiness unmixed, is not to be the portion of frail mortality—

“ Lest man should sink beneath his present pain,

“ Lest man should triumph in his present joy ;

“ For him th’ unvarying laws of Heaven ordain,

“ Hope in his ills, and to his bliss alloy.”

Were human nature universally prone, like you, to pore upon the dark side of the leaf, a cheerful countenance would be a *rara avis*, not to be met with above once in a century.

Should Mrs. Leslie’s conjecture be a just one, and I feel a strong prepossession that it will prove so, what will your fair ladyship have to say to me for the many pretty rebukes with which I have been severely lashed, for the illiberality of forming a rash conclusion ?

My father has not only authorised me to make Mrs. Leslie and yourself an invitation to Westburne-lodge, but seconds it with the most earnest entreaties from himself.

himself. Agreeable society would undoubtedly be more beneficial to him than all the prescriptions of the faculty. Surely you will not have the cruelty to refuse to oblige him, and gratify your Julia with your company, when you reflect how long it is since she enjoyed the primary comfort of her youth. That dear, good woman, Mrs. Leslie, cannot resist solicitations, which tend so materially to promote the happiness of a fellow-creature.

Write by the next post, I conjure you. Do not keep me in suspense, and thereby be answerable for the only oppression which yet adheres to the heart of your

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CXXI.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

HOW are you mistaken, Julia, in the character of your friend!—I ungrateful for the merciful dispensations which are lavished on me! I poring principally on the dark side of the leaf! Discard the unjust idea, I beseech you. I thought you were better acquainted with my disposition: but it is no wonder, that the gloomy tints, which adversity has of late cast over it, should have obliterated its natural traits from your recollection. Do not think that I would willingly embitter the cup of happiness, which
once

once again presents itself to my lips.—
No, you know I am no friend to affectation of any kind; but of all the various species of it, there is none which so particularly excites my disgust as the affectation of fine feelings. No:

“ Be it my plan to live as merry as I can,
“ Life’s barren vale with flowers t’ adorn,
“ And pluck a rose from ev’ry thorn.”

Yet I own that I possess not that enviable apathy which alone could enable me to forget that

“ Such things were,
“ And were most dear.”

But to exchange this melancholy subject for one which I flatter myself will be more exhilarating to your mind, be it known to you then, that on Monday fortnight you may expect a visit from your old school-fellow, but not accompanied by Mrs. Leslie.

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Do

Do not be angry, when I acknowledge that I tremble at the thoughts of another separation from her. Only consider the consequences of the last, and you cannot be surprized at my weakness. No other earthly inducement could have prevailed with me to have absented myself from her ; but you divide my heart between you, and it was her own wish that I should accept your invitation. That tender affection, which is too frequently attended by a degree of painful anxiety, has created an idea that there is a necessity for me to change the air, an idea which gives me much concern, as it only serves to distress a mind whose ease is far dearer to me than my own ; whilst I am fully sensible that it has no other foundation whatever than a too-tremulous anxiety for my welfare. Having accidentally caught a little cold last week, and a trifling cough being its natural attendant, my dear guardian

guardian (for that is the appellation by which she chooses to be distinguished) has unfortunately encouraged a notion, that it is of an alarming nature; wherefore she obliges me to drink ass's milk, and actually pursue the regimen of a person in the first stage of a consumption, whilst I am really astonished, that my constitution has encountered so many severe attacks, without sustaining any more apparent injury than it has done. I do not wish to deceive you, when I declare, that, notwithstanding a meagre, pale face, I feel myself inwardly well, and do not despair, with the good nursing I now experience, to chase away all these ugly chimeras, with a pair of fat, blooming cheeks, in a fortnight.

“ And may Heaven establish the credit of your prophetic genius!” cried the good lady by my side, on my inadvertently repeating the last sentence as I wrote it.

“ Thank you, thank you, my dear Madam,” returned I, “ for your kind prayer ; but not for that ugly sigh by which it was accompanied.”

“ And why not ?” said she, “ it was equally the offspring of my affection.”

“ May be so ; but it was a brat that I would have stifled in the birth without remorse, notwithstanding,” said I : so I laid down my pen to rally her into better spirits. I always feel an impulse to be melancholy when she is so ; but never fail to exert every effort to resist its influence ; and am often happy enough to rout an enemy which would lay heavy contributions on us both ; but I have not said a word of the dissipation in which I have been engaged.

Would you believe, that I have once more ventured within the doors of a play-house, under different patronage though from that with which I made my first appearance there. Mrs. Leslie, who I believe

believe thinks I have wept enough during the last half year, to serve for my whole life, thought it proper to avoid the heart-rending woes of the tragic muse, and judiciously selected the choicest treat certainly that her lively sister has to boast in her whole stock of mirth-inspiring nonsense; but as many wise plans are marred in the execution, so in this the good lady was disappointed in her considerate design. She went, as you perceive, predetermined that I should not weep: but mark the difference of the event—Love makes a Man, with the whimsical after-piece of The Farmer, made up the amusements of the evening; and the matchless drollery of Munden, in the character of Don Lewis and Jemmy Jumps, provoked my risibility so immoderately, that the tears actually flowed from my eyes. I was half ashamed of myself, and well aware of the vulgarity of having so little command over the emotions of the mind;

but no matter. I think I have earned the indulgence, and I only hope such delicate persons as are too refined to laugh, when they are delighted, may be spared the sensibility to shrink at the cold hand of affliction, should it happen to light upon their heads.

I have been at a private concert also, and even took a part in the performance, to the amount of strumming over one of Handel's concertos on the harpsichord. O! Julia, I shall make ample amends for loss of time when we meet. Mrs. Leslie, ever studious of promoting my pleasure, has purchased for me a charming instrument, and I practice pretty well at present: I found my fingers at first very clumsy and awkward in the execution of a difficult lesson, but they grow more pliant every day; and as for my voice, I believe no raven ever had a clearer; but I will get quit of this tiresome cough and hoarseness with all possible expedition, and bring a well-tuned

tuned pipe to sing duets with my Julia, as I once was used to do. But to return to my subject: our little musical party was at the house of a Mr. and Mrs. Poyntz, who, with their daughter, an only child, and a Colonel Audley, brother to the lady, were our companions at the theatre: they became acquainted with my patroness abroad, and seem to be deserving of such a friend. Can they be honoured with a higher panegyric from my pen? yet, if I mistake not, the Colonel will scarcely feel himself satisfied with that title. You are not the first person to whom I have ventured to disclose this opinion, and a hearty laugh, with an unaffected surprize, were excited by the idea. With what sort of a reception a confirmation of it from better authority might be favoured, is not for me to conjecture, but *nous verrons*. They are both amiable, and there is apparently little disparity either in years, sentiments, or fortune. Whatever may
be

be the decision, it is sure to be founded on judgment and good sense ; and grant, kind Heaven ! that the result of it may be, if not an augmentation, at least no diminution, of felicity.

Here have I scribbled over two sheets of paper without once mentioning a piece of news, with which you must be acquainted before I can possibly conclude ; though, were it likely to tease you as much as it has done me, you would have no reason to thank me for the communication.

As we were taking a drive through Hyde Park, on Tuesday morning, a genteel young man, in deep mourning, cantering carelessly along, suddenly checked his horse on coming up to the carriage, and, looking full in my face, identified the person and features of my quondam friend Mr. Saunders ; on which I inconsiderately bowed ; and the confusion, with which he received this little, common courtesy, first reminded me of the
impropriety

impropriety of noticing a man, of whose character and connexions I had witnessed so many unfavourable appearances.

This incident did not pass without awakening the curiosity of my quick-sighted companion, who failed not to rally me on the adventure of the planet-struck knight; but I told her immediately who he was, and asked her advice as to my conduct in future, should chance ever more take a fancy to throw him in my way; to which she replied, that it was a maxim with her, never to countenance actions which she despised, and that she thought, avoiding all acquaintance whatever with a professed libertine was a duty which every modest woman owed to herself: “besides,” continued she, “this fellow may be *the Lord knows who*. You are not certain that you know his real name any more than his family; he may be a highway-man, a pick-pocket, a gambler: in short, there can be nothing despicable in his character

character which your knowledge of him may not permit you to suspect."

"Very true," said I, perfectly sensible of the justice, though rather hurt, I confess, at the severity, of the remark, which I thought was greater than the object of it deserved. Whatever may have been his behaviour to some women, to me it was always not only unexceptionable, but friendly and respectful; yet, as I had nothing to plead, except this one partial merit in his vindication, I found myself obliged to acquiesce in his condemnation; and although when, to my great astonishment, I met him in the evening following at the concert, I could not help rejoicing to see him in so creditable a circle, I strictly adhered to the injunctions I had received, and indeed found no difficulty in the task, for a sort of consciousness of past errors seemed to throw a restraint upon his manners, and so far from addressing himself to me, he did not once offer to
join

join in any conversation in which I happened to take a part ; but the good Colonel, who visited us this morning, relieved me from the painful necessity of treating with contempt one, whom I own, in spite of circumstances, I feel a strong propensity to esteem.

“ I had a huge inclination,” said he, as he took his seat, “ to have brought a friend along with me, but his extreme modesty proved an insurmountable obstacle to his happiness.”

“ Bless me !” exclaimed my guardian, “ what is the name pray of this extraordinary phenomenon ? A young man of fashion, governed by modesty in these days, must be a curiosity indeed. I wish you had brought him with you with all my heart.”

I said nothing. It instantly occurred to me, that Mr. Saunders was the gentleman alluded to, till, for a moment, I thought myself undeceived by the Colonel’s reply.

“ His

“ His name is Edward Hervy,” returned he ; “ he is a young man of an excellent heart, a fine fortune, and good family ; but, through some little, adventitious circumstances, arising from an ill-directed education, he has been precipitated into errors, under the disreputable garb of which it was his misfortune to become acquainted with Miss Worthy, a circumstance which he most feelingly laments, as it precludes the hope of renewing an enjoyment which it has taught him properly to estimate. Diffidence is undoubtedly an herb of grace, and not of very common growth at present : therefore I did not wish to plant presumption in its room, or I think I durst have encouraged the poor fellow to flatter himself, that an inexorable mind could not lurk beneath an exterior of such sweetness and benignity.”

“ O Lord, sir !” cried I, luckily recollecting

collecting that it was an answer applicable to every subject.

“Come,” said he, taking my hand, “you are superior to affectation, I am sure. Tell me honestly now, if you have charity enough to pardon the transient errors of the fictitious Mr. Saunders, in the person of a truly worthy man.”

As I turned my eyes upon my guardian, before I presumed to answer this address, “Yes, yes,” said she, with one of her expressive smiles (on my conscience I do not wonder at the Colonel’s partiality; were I a man, I should be a thousand times more in love with her than with ever a pretty flirt of the million:)—“Yes, yes,” said she, “I will take upon myself the task of answering for my ward in this instance. I think I may pronounce, that it is not in her nature to be unmerciful to a repentant sinner. Pray introduce the gentleman to me tomorrow: I have no

quarrel with him, you know ; and the friendship, with which you honour him, leaves no doubt of his being worthy our esteem."

Was not this delightful ? The compliment was felt in the very citadel of the heart, and called forth such an illumination in the windows !

To be sure, I did not seize the occasion to dart a wicked glance towards another quarter, which was not unsuccessful in its aim, if I may judge from the conscious glow that it conjured into the guilty cheek : yet, for all this ocular demonstration, the detected will not acknowledge the detection. But, whenever I give the reins to my foolery, she cries, " Plhaw ! you silly chit, do be quiet, and cease to ridicule an old woman ;" but without being angry ; for she must know herself too well to fear exciting such an impulse.

The tenderness of the heart is fine game for me ; for it is that in which I
am

am in least danger of being foiled at my own weapons.

I think I need not add any very forcible arguments to convince you, that my spirits are tolerably recruited. Yet, were not their tranquillity frequently interrupted by moments of severe regret, could you lay your hand upon your heart, and declare that I merited its continuance?

The cause of Mrs. Leslie's declining the acceptance of your invitation is this vile law-suit, which detains her, much against her will, in the metropolis. The object of litigation, I believe, is not a matter of any great consequence, otherwise than being the only part of her portion (having no children) which she could dispose of at her death; I am not insensible, therefore, of the kind motive of her assiduity in the business. It is her present intention, when this troublesome matter is a little more in train, to join me at Westburne-lodge, and spend

a few days with you, before she proceeds to Bath, where she purposes passing the remainder of the Winter.

I shall expect a line from you yet, before I see you, in return for which I trust you will accept the *personal* acknowledgments of your ever-grateful and affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S. I have got the rhiming mania upon me again, and have actually been scribbling an invocation to the goddess of health; so you see I am not to blame, if, instead of the substance, you should be startled by the shadow only of your old friend; but never mind—whilst the shadow retains a heart, it will never cease to beat to the old tune composed from the wild notes of artless childhood, innocence, and love.

AN INVOCATION TO HEALTH.

FAIR Hygeia! source and fountain
 Of this transient world's delights ;
 Thou, whose pow'rs, all woe surmounting,
 Bless our days, and calm our nights :

In affliction's ample quiver
 Rend'ring each envenom'd dart
 Pointless, and unable ever
 Deep to wound thy guarded heart.

Health! thou only solid blessing
 Which frail mortals here enjoy ;
 What is wealth, not thee possessing,
 But an empty, gilded toy ?

O! return, inconstant rover—
 Let me woo thee to my breast ;
 Grateful smiles my face shall cover,
 To receive the welcome guest.

Come, with rosy bloom adorning,
 Animate my pallid cheek ;
 As the glorious rays of morning
 Through the clouds triumphant break.

Fortitude herself sustaining,
 All the tribe of pain controul ;
 Ev'ry anxious thought restraining,
 Shed thy balsam o'er my soul.

This weak frame, no more deserting,
 From calamity defend ;
 Ev'ry threaten'd blow averting,
 Be my constant, guardian friend.

LETTER CXXII.

SELIMA

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

WESTBURNE-LODGE.

AFTER passing a night of more repose at S——, than our doleful parting seemed to promise, I arose with Aurora, and pursued my journey in much better spirits than it was commenced. Your advice was not thrown away upon me : I vigorously combated the dismal ideas of our former separation all the way, and endeavoured only to contemplate those fairer prospects, which have taken their station before my eyes. Should they ever be sullied by a melancholy retrospective

rospective thought, attribute it to the weakness of my nature, and not to the murmuring disposition of my mind. No, my dear madam ; sensible as I am, alas ! that no sigh can recal or benefit the beloved friends who are lost to me for ever, such an unavailing memorial of affliction shall never voluntarily be suffered to distress the bosom of her whose happiness I may now flatter myself it will be my constant employment to study to promote.

I wish you had witnessed Julia's surprise, as she folded me in her arms :—
 “ Is this the shadow—Are these the pallid cheeks,” exclaimed she, “ that I have been threatened to behold ? God be praised !” with hands uplifted, and eyes streaming with tears of joy and thankfulness ; “ all our sufferings are over, and my Selima will live to be the pride and comfort of her friends.”

The fine, frosty air, in which I had travelled, had given me a colour in addition

dition to the glow of delight which this long-wished-for meeting must have diffused over my countenance; and I verily believe, the dear girl, from your apprehensions, which I had related to her, expected to see nothing more than the ghost of my former self. No sooner had I stepped out of the chaise than she eagerly seized me by the arm, and, carrying me to her father, who was on the lawn before the house,

“Give me leave, sir,” said she, with an air of friendly exultation, “to introduce to you Miss Selima Worthy, that beloved companion of my youth, for whom I have experienced so much heartfelt misery and supreme delight. As for the latter, let this moment speak”—

“Your most obedient, humble servant, madam,” said Mr. Westburne, formally interrupting the lively fall of his animated daughter; “I hope you

have

have had a pleasant journey, and that you left your friends well in town."

To which I bowed assent, and returned the compliment by congratulations on his own recovery, and good wishes for the perfect re-establishment of his health; in which, I soon perceived, I had had the good fortune to hit upon an inexhaustible topic. Poor man! how cruelly he is tormented with imaginary evils! I have been used to wonder that the father of Julia could ever be indifferent to the perfections of such a child; but I now confess my astonishment is much abated; for how is it possible properly to estimate what we are not able to understand?

I could not help rejoicing, that the appearance and behaviour of Mr. Saunders wrought a change in your ideas of his character, of which I confess I am inclined to think more favourably than past occurrences would justify; but I need not have doubted the kindness of
his

his reception under the patronage—but mum!—I see how you are torturing your features to metamorphose the natural smile, which would play about your lips, into a reproving frown : but it will not do. You have often said you delighted in my sauciness, and therefore I not only indulge, but even cherish, the playfulness of my nature ; but if ever you should see it in danger of outstepping its proper limits, have the kindness to correct it before it has offended.

Adieu, my dear madam : I know your generous consideration, of which the smallest portion is always allotted to yourself, will find an excuse for the brevity of this epistle, and at the same time intimate to you how much my peace of mind depends on the frequency of yours.

Miss Westburne desires that her affectionate regard may be united with the boundless love and gratitude of your

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER CXXIII.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

SELIMA.

BE as faucy as you please: fear no danger in giving a free scope to the innocent cheerfulness which nature has implanted in your disposition, and which happily the cruel hand of adversity, though it has rudely checked, has not extirpated from its native soil.

Selima, to be most perfectly agreeable to me, you must be most perfectly yourself, unrestrained and undisguised. Dissimulation or affectation could never lend you one, but might deprive you of innumerable charms: But forgive an attempt

attempt to warn you against enemies from whom your own understanding is so ample a security. It is from nurtured grief that I apprehend the most dangerous consequences to your health and spirits ; but I flatter myself I am in possession of a sovereign antidote to the ravages of one destructive worm, which has, I think, assisted much in preying secretly upon that damask cheek. Admire the forbearance with which I stood the fire of your raillery—naturally considering it as merely the production of your own prolific brain, when I had so open a field for retaliation : but whilst I sustained no injury from the artillery of your wit, I felt not sufficient provocation to make reprisals, which I knew would penetrate to the very heart of an adversary already vanquished by a subtler foe. But to quit this metaphor *militaire*, for my choice of which you will be apt to account perhaps, be it known to you, that I discovered with a deep

deep concern, the tender partiality which the insinuating manners of Mr. Saunders had effected in your mind; a mind which, from former circumstances, I had reason to suppose not particularly susceptible to such impressions, and in which I therefore apprehended it would prove proportionably lasting. From the moment that you related to me that part of your history in which you were introduced to his acquaintance, I apprehended it. Need I say wherefore? My child was threatened with an affliction which I knew not how to mitigate or prevent, that of suffering a passion, which, without an act of indiscretion, had no apparent prospect of gratification. This was the true cause of my harsh reply to your application in the Park; the cause too of my earnestly urging you to the immediate acceptance of your friend's invitation, precluded even as I was from the pleasure of accompanying you; and by the same cause is *my* heart now

exhilarated through the promised restoration of tranquillity to *yours*.

The pleasure I experienced, when first undeceived in the character of the man who is the possessor of your affections, is now completed by the knowledge that he not only merits the regard with which he is distinguished, but returns it in the warmest and most disinterested manner.

Colonel Audley waited on me this morning, with his friend's proposals, in form, which were such as fully denoted the fervency and sincerity of the passion you have inspired, as well as the liberality of his principles; liberality I think I may venture to pronounce, far exceeding the moderation of your wishes. But as your approbation, I am certain, is not to be tenable by acres of land, or skins of parchment, this is a part of the treaty on which it is unnecessary to dwell at present; I shall therefore only hint to you, that your Strephon waits but for your permission, to cast a more agreeable

agreeable object at your feet, having sufficient acquaintance with Mr. Westburne to authorize the visit.

In compliment to your extraordinary foresight, I shall now candidly acknowledge, that this friendly negociation proved a preliminary to one which served to verify your predictions.

“ And now, my dear Mrs. Leslie,” said my respected visitor, taking my hand, and depriving me of a pinch of snuff, which I was obliged to throw from my fingers on this tender address, for which I was altogether unprepared—“ Having, I hope, performed the duty of a friend to the utmost of my abilities, and I flatter myself not without some prospect of success, permit me”—but I will not destroy your prescience in an instant, by depriving it of all further subsistence; on the contrary, I shall make the most of this opportunity to revenge myself for the sly inuendos of a faucy girl, by

leaving her on the tenter-hooks of curiosity.

Yet, my sweet ward, though the licence of raillery is (and may it remain) reciprocal between us, I join fervently in your wish, that it never may be indulged to the detriment of one serious comfort on the part of either ; and to that end I conjure you to believe, that to whatever changes or vicissitudes my situation may be subject, my mind never can be less attached or attentive to your interest than at the present moment, when it constitutes the only value of my life ; but as you will probably be married before me, that consideration will have lost its weight.

You have found out, that Mr. W— is no Solomon, I perceive ; I believe there is nothing very extraordinary in the discovery : I confess it is one that I made on a very trifling acquaintance with him, yet I think you will acquit me of having ever expressed my opinion
on

on the subject. I have not a disposition to extract any amusement from the foibles or infirmities of human nature, and from what I can derive no pleasure myself, I never expect to yield any in the communication of it to another. "A word to the wise is enough." You understand I am sure, and will forgive, the lesson it contains. Pray remember me respectfully to this *pauvre malade imaginaire*, who is no less an object of compassion, be assured, for his fancied than his real disorders, as they are equally the produce of some internal cause.

Neglect not to write to me by the return of the post. Have some commiseration for the state of your lover's patience, if you will not allow that your own is more than commonly sensitive in an instance which so nearly concerns the happiness of both.

To Miss Westburne say every thing for me that your own esteem for her

suggest : as for yourself, I trust my actions will express, far beyond the force of language, how much I am your devoted friend,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER CXXIV.

 SELIMA

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

THE amazement, in which I am plunged by the contents of your letter, scarcely leaves me the power of answering it according to your request.

The tender partiality, which the insinuating manners of Mr. Saunders have effected in my mind! Believe me, I entreat, I beseech you, my revered, my beloved patroness, whilst I am ready to admit, that the manners of Mr. Saunders (Mr. Hervey I ought to say) towards me, have been invariably those of a gentleman, and a friend, they have
 ever

ever been, and ever will be, incapable of effecting any other impression on my mind, than what is the genuine offspring of esteem and good will.—As for love, though utterly insensible of the passion it denotes, have I not reason to shudder at a word, which has been the ostensible cause of all my sufferings, and which now appearing under the dignified patronage of your hand, seems to have re-assumed all its former terrors?—Yet surely I shall not want the benign mediation of a Leslie to alleviate the severity of her own commands.—No, madam, it is not my part to oppose, but to submit implicitly to, your judgment, whatever it may decree. I will never more be the victim of disobedience; if it be your irrevocable will that I must marry—be it so—my life is at your disposal—Yet if you knew how I tremble while I write—Pray forgive me, and do not ascribe to perverseness, this perhaps unprecedented repugnance to entering into
a state,

a state, which I revere, and to which I believe the extremes of earthly happiness and misery equally belong. I hope in any other instance, I have not evinced the same inflexibility of temper; but without a better earnest of felicity than indifference can present, I would not brave the dangers of a state in which no mediocrity of comfort was ever found to be the partner of a throne—not for any consideration whatever, except the preservation of your regard.

Once more, I submit myself to your will—but if I am to be condemned—leave me not in apprehension of the sentence, that I may learn resignation to a fate which your word must make inevitable—But spare me, yet a while, an interview with one, whom as a friend I can esteem, but as a lover, I fear, I must ever regard as an object of unconquerable disgust.

Bewildered, as are my thoughts at present, by this threatened blight of my
revived

revived happiness—the expected augmentation of yours is a gleam of pleasure to my heart—Surely it could not be contaminated by the continuance of mine—But I had determined not to be importunate, but with all humility to remain, whilst I have life and reason, your grateful and unreservedly obedient,

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S. Mr. Westburne's spirits are improving daily, a change which Julia kindly attributes to the little addition my arrival has made to his society, for he keeps up no intercourse with the neighbouring families.

LETTER

LETTER CXXV.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

SELIMA.

WELL! of all the characters which have ever come within my observation, yours is, without exception, the most undefinable. I am wonderfully mistaken if you have any violent objection to a little flirtation with an agreeable young man; yet should the most approved trifler degenerate into a serious admirer, he immediately becomes the object of your aversion and disgust.

Methinks, as you are so peculiarly exempt from the attacks of this destructive malady, and therefore cannot, like
the

the viper, be a remedy for the wounds you have inflicted, it is your duty to advertise all those, whom it may concern, of their danger, instead of unmercifully decoying them into the snare.

Jesting apart, I really grieve that I have been the cause, though but of a transitory palpitation of your heart, unaccountable as it is.

How could the idea ever find admission into your brain, that I could be so blind to my own interest, as to wish you to marry from any other motive, than the promotion of your own happiness; of the best method for the security of which, I have the humility to allow that you are the best judge?

You know that life is precious, and although I have been blessed with fortitude to struggle through innumerable misfortunes without any apparent injury to my constitution, yet from the common course of nature, it is most probable, that you will survive me many years, a
period

period, for which, at the best, I shall not be able to provide according to my wish.—Yet, though I confess it would give me inexpressible satisfaction to behold you settled in a state of permanent independence and connubial happiness, I shall never desire you to sacrifice the happiness of the present moment, by way of guarding against the possible contingencies of the future: therefore from this time, save only *en badinage*, I abjure the subject; unless, as a secondary exception indeed, instead of your ladyship, it should happen to relate entirely to myself, or the admirer of my *youth* and *beauty*; for I have no insurmountable abhorrence to the name of a lover, believe me. I have no notion that it is necessary to detest a man, because his affection for me is ardent and sincere; and as for the Colonel and myself, we are just upon as amicable terms as if no tender speeches had ever passed between us; nor are we one step nearer

matrimony, than if no such romantic project had been in contemplation on the part of either. So your kind wishes are not likely to prevail to the full extent of your meaning ; but if they succeed so far as to ensure me the continuance of the comforts I enjoy at present, I shall have sufficient cause for thankfulness ; and the surest way to render them effectual, is to banish the melancholy which still preys upon your spirits, though you endeavour by a veil of forced cheerfulness to conceal the intruder from the observation of your friends.

The death of Mrs. Anne Aubrey was undoubtedly a blow with which it was not in your nature to be unaffected : nor could I have loved you, had your heart been capable of such ingratitude. She was our common benefactress : my affection and veneration for her memory are no less than equal to your own : yet, whilst the virtues of our departed friends should render them ever dear to
our

our recollection, we should derive consolation from the certainty, that in our loss is the completion of their felicity.

As I told you before, the Colonel and I are as friendly as ever ; yet it is a plan I do not recommend for your adoption. The platonic system may be more practicable at our time of life, than yours ; but do not on the other hand, I entreat you, my dear girl, return a compliment with scorn and derision, which is undoubtedly the highest and most unequivocal a woman can receive. Poor Mr. Hervey ! Had you been present this morning, I think you must have felt some compassion for his disappointment, on hearing the reply to his overtures, which it was my office to deliver. But I believe a little vanity stepped in good time to his assistance, and bade him ascribe the failure of the negociation to the indifference of the agent ; so I suppose you may expect it to be renewed, for which you must not consider me as

G 2

blameable,

blameable, for I have said every thing in my power to convince him of the immutability of his fate, short of repeating such mortifying expressions as disgust, contempt, and so forth: for I conclude you cannot have the cruelty to annihilate the poor creature all at once, merely for entertaining a better opinion of you than you deserve.

These tiresome lawyers are enough to destroy the patience *even* of a woman. I am still in doubt, when I shall be permitted to rejoin you, and ill brook relinquishing the pleasure which I have regained so lately.

The Poyntz family are on the eve of their departure for Bath, and have kindly undertaken the trouble of procuring a house for our reception, as near their own as possible. They all (not excepting my dear Colonel) are very anxious to preserve a distinguished place in your esteem, a boon which I think you cannot have any inclination to refuse, either

either in consideration of their own
merit, or of their being the revered
friends of your truly affectionate

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER CXXVI.

SELIMA

TO

MRS. LESLIE.

WHAT a weight have you taken from my mind, my dear madam. I have no hatred or contempt for Mr. Hervey believe me. You know I had a great inclination to esteem him, even whilst I imagined he was undeserving of such a sentiment. Now I know *your* thoughts, I do not care a rush about his. Let him write or come, his conversation would be a great acquisition to our party. I should like a visit from him of all things, if he would through off the lover with his great coat, or transfer his affections to

to a worthier object, which, by the bye, if he has a grain of sense, it will be impossible for him to avoid under this roof. Julia was always a sweet girl; but now she is beautiful as an angel. Those arch hazel eyes, shaded by a deep brown fringe, with hair falling in natural ringlets of the same colour, give an animation and fire to the countenance, so superior to the cold insipidity of blue and flaxen!—Pray do not talk of even white teeth again, till you have refreshed your memory with another view of Miss Westburne's. O! Gemini, how charming it would be to conjure up an attachment between these two amiables! could a meeting be contrived, the difficulty were over; their admiration would undoubtedly be reciprocal; for Hervey is as handsome as he is agreeable; and mutual happiness could not fail to be the consequence of such an union.

I have an admirable genius for building castles in the air you see, and am
not

LETTER CXXVI.

SELIMA

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I have an admirable genius for building castles in the air you see, and am
not

not totally discouraged by your unmerciful demolition of the last stately fabrick I erected. What Halcyon days had I the wisdom to foresee for the happy Audley and yourself! I am not a bit like the dog in the manger, though I have determined against having a husband myself, I do not wish my friends to prefer a life of single blessedness.

I am almost afraid of saying so; but really this good 'Squire Westburne is the oddest mortal I ever met with in my life: he does not enumerate his maladies so much as he did, but what is still more absurd, he is turning beau, I believe, in his old age, and now pays more attention to the making up of his figure than his medicines: then his conversation is so extremely tiresome, that I have not the smallest enjoyment of my much-wished-for visit, except when I can have my friend's company entirely to myself, which, if we did not sleep in the same apartment, would very seldom
be

be the case, for I am unfortunately become such a prodigious favourite with her papa, that he will scarcely permit me to be out of his sight a moment, and what is most insufferably provoking, he never pays me a compliment but by some perverted comparison he contrives to throw the whole expence of it on his gentle daughter, as if he barbarously wished to dissolve the amity which subsists between us. On Sunday last he complained violently of the cramp in one of his legs, and Julia, with the most amiable attention, threw herself on her knees by his side, drew off his stocking, and rubbed the afflicted limb without any effect towards removing the pain. Perceiving her fatigue, it was but natural for me to offer my assistance, which my poor exhausted friend was compelled to accept; this honourable office therefore devolved upon me, in which I doubt I shall not hastily be superseded.

perfeded. Unluckily he has difcovered
 fome peculiar efficacy in my foft hand ;
 and not an evening has paffed fince, but
 I have been exercifed to the utmoft of
 my ftrength in the fame tirefome task—
 tirefome, becaufe I am fully perfuaded
 it is now unnecelfary, whatever it may
 have been, and that I am only made a
 flave to a contemptible caprice.—Nay,
 he even obliges me to pour out his phy-
 fic, and drop his laudanum :—there is
 fuch a fingular grace forfooth in all my
 actions, it is a cordial to look at me ;
 whilft, if his own child, who is elegance
 perfonified, prefumes to approach him,
 he pretends that his nerves are thrown
 into diforder by her aukwardnefs. Can
 you wonder that I rail? Were it not
 for Julia, I fhould wifh lady Alicia to
 return, merely to fave her *caro fpofo*
 the trouble of making a fool of himfelf.
 But I am fummoned to the tea-table, a
 releafe my dear guardy for which you
 may be thankful ; for had I been fuffered

to

to scribble till I was tired, there is no
faying, when you would have seen the
concluding name of your grateful and
affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXVII.

FROM THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

AS I am alive, the talked-of but little-expected visitor is actually arrived already—Julia and I were seated on a sofa warbling a little duet, and my friend accompanying our voices with the lute, an instrument which she touches with infinite taste ;—whilst I, with one arm leaning over her shoulder, held the music-book, on which our eyes were so intently fixed, that we both started at the entrance of the booted swain, as if, instead of himself, we had seen his apparition ; Mr. Hervey, you know, is perfectly well bred

bred, has all the ease of fashionable address without the puppyism, which is too frequently its attendant, and I cannot say (O! death to my poor vanity) that it seemed to suffer any disadvantage, even in this critical conjuncture, from the embarrassment, which I have always understood were not only incident to, but utterly inseparable from, the tender passion. Dear Madam, the gentleman has recovered the wounds you speak of to a miracle, unless a pair of fat, blooming cheeks be symptomatic of the pain. What signifies having a lover, if one cannot imprint the dismal character with some permanency on the brow? It is the only way that I know of, to publish the power of our charms: for there is no having the names of all the gallant knights, who wear our chains, cried in every market-place in the hundred.

On receiving a genteel compliment on the visible efficacy of the country air, I could not refrain observing, that in one

instance, however singular it might be, that of the town had an obvious claim to credit for its salubrity.

“ Ah ! Miss Worthy,” said he, taking my hand and pressing it with a deep sigh (for he had immediately seated himself by my side, and by his manner altogether seemed to place the visit to my account, though he apologised to Mr. Westburne for having delayed it) “ Do you mean to flatter me by the insinuation, or to exculpate yourself from the ill consequences of your cruelty ? Believe me, however my countenance may denote my feelings”——

My face was instantly on a glow, and in order to give a turn to the conversation——

“ Pray have you seen Mrs. Leslie lately ?” demanded I.

“ I have,” returned he piteously again, “ but had not the good fortune to be honoured with her commands.”

Julia

Julia luckily returned at that moment with a book of catches and glees, for which she had been rummaging, and relieved me from a very distressing situation; for although this dialogue had passed in a half-whisper, that circumstance only served to give it a particularity not unobserved by her curious papa. Were it not for this provoking *penchant*, how we should enjoy such an acquisition to our musical party!

Mr. Westburne delights in sweet sounds, as much as any of us, and Mr. H. plays capitally on the violin and German flute.

Do you know I was almost terrified out of my wits, lest the old gentleman should expect the performance of my evening's task as usual; but the pain was more merciful, and spared for once the poor *calf*—Nay, now do not look so angry; indeed, and indeed, I did not mean any thing that could possibly offend your

scrupulous tenderness to the infirmities of human nature.

You know I am too giddy to reflect always, that a word may have several meanings :—if it happens to convey one, which suits my purpose, I never think about the rest.

The interview of yesterday has not apparently been attended with the fatality I predicted—another of my brilliant castles tumbled to the dust I fear. Yet who knows what time and reason, journeying soberly together, may effect in their progress. I seized the first opportunity last night to enquire of my friend, what she thought of our handsome visitor ; when, instead of an answer, she retorted upon me question for question, which is a very faucy trick, and the huffey ought to be corrected for it.

“ Rather give me leave to ask you,” said she, “ how you feel yourself affected with regard to this accomplished swain ? for in this instance your opinion is so infinitely

finitely more material than mine"—

"Is he not," resumed I (determined not to be diverted from my purpose) "tell me honestly, worth fifty of your Montgomerys?"

"Worth fifty of my Montgomerys!" repeated she, her face and neck glowing with crimson as she spoke: "Were they to be sold by the gross indeed, possibly he might be worth fifty Montgomerys, fifty times told; but might I select an individual of that name, I could mention one, whose value, in my estimation, would so far overbalance that of all the Herveys in the world."—

"So, so, then, you are absolutely in love, Julia!" cried I, in amazement and concern: "Pardon me, my dear girl," kissing her cheek, and throwing my arms about her neck, "I did not mean to irritate a wound, I do assure you: had I known this sooner,—but I would not take a hint, and through a foolish in-

credulity, rejected your confidence on this subject."

"Pshaw!" returned she, "your gravity is more tormenting than your railery. Do not think I am in love, I entreat you; it is a passion I know only by name, but it is impossible to be acquainted with an amiable man without esteeming him."

"True," said I, "but wherefore should you confine a sentiment to one to which merit has an equal claim, wherever it may reside? Is not poor Herve, think you, as worthy to participate?"

"Probably he may," said she, "but you should recollect, that I never was introduced to the gentleman before this evening, and though the person, like a picture, may display its beauties and its defects to the first view, the mind is a book which gradually unfolds its merits to the reader, and is not to be understood by the title-page. You must acknowledge,

knowledge, Selima, that the principal traits of Mr. Hervey's character, as they have been represented to me by your pen, were not calculated to arrest the judgment in his favour."

"How can you be so ill-natured?" cried I, "surely Julia Westburne cannot want the charity to forgive the indiscretions of youth, under the disadvantages of a bad education, when they have so early been superseded by the honour and probity which were the true natives of the heart."

"We are playing at cross-purposes, I believe," returned my friend; "I flatter myself, you will not do me the injustice to suppose, that my heart can be indifferent to the worth of the happy man, whom Heaven has ordained to be your husband; but at the same time I hope you do not think there is any necessity for me to surrender it entirely to his possession, when you know he has not an equivalent to return."

"Ordained

"Ordained to be my husband!" repeated I, with a degree of vexation which I could not suppress; "Have I been guilty of such unpardonable duplicity on any other subject, as to be utterly unworthy of confidence in this? Upon my honour and conscience—as I hope for"—"Hush," said the incredulous girl, laying her hand hastily on my mouth, "there is nothing so dangerous as protestations: If you would keep your resolutions, do not swear."

In this manner we chattered away half the night; but I think I have given you a sufficient specimen of our conversation, which did not grow any more interesting towards the sequel; though it ended in repose, a blessing from which I will no longer withhold your patience. The bell has summoned me to the breakfast-parlour ten minutes ago, where the rest of the family are by this time assembled: therefore, with a heart abounding in gratitude

titude and affection, dearest madam,
adieu.—

Yet I cannot resign my pen, without mentioning a circumstance, which gives me great pleasure. Mr. Hervey has enjoyed a promenade *tete-a-tete* with the gentle Julia, all the time that I have been scribbling to you.

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXVIII.

FROM THE SAME

TO

THE SAME.

How tiresome is the tediousness of the law!—you know not, my dear madam how painfully I feel the continuance of our separation; yet, since it must be so, I am selfish enough to rejoice that the regret is mutual.

Do not, I entreat you, apprehend that my flippancy is affected merely to deceive you: it may perhaps have been cherished and encouraged, till it took a form beyond its natural growth, and from thence might be mistaken for a counterfeit; but I trust you will give me credit,

credit, when I seriously assure you, that my spirits are wonderfully recruited, and that my health and strength have found such a powerful restorative in a clear air, that I am almost become the same rosy country girl that you remember me in former times. Forgive the sigh, which will accompany the idea, but I am sure the one, which seldom fails to rise in your own bosom on the like occasion, will be ready to plead its excuse.

Mr. Hervey has taken his leave of absence: indeed his host gave him so many polite hints that his company was obtrusive, that his pride took the alarm. Love, alas! was obliged to yield to this more despotic ruler of the human mind; and the gallant swain, with true modern knight-errantry, beat a retreat, quitted the castle, and left his peerless princess in the hands of the governor; who, tho I cannot say his appearance conveys any striking idea of the giants or necromancers of old times, thinks himself sufficiently

sufficiently *enchanted* to secure the dam-
 sel to himself. Dear madam, you would
 really think my little wits had entirely
 forsaken me, were I to recount to you
 all the absurdities of this silly old man ;
 but first for the dismissal of the young
 one, who, to do him justice did not de-
 part till he was perfectly assured that his
 stay would be to no purpose.

Not thinking it necessary to appear to
 consider Mr. Herveys visit at Westburne-
 lodge as a compliment to myself, I took
 every possible precaution to prevent a re-
 newal of a subject, on which he was al-
 ready acquainted with my unalterable
 sentiments ; and, excepting now and
 then a gentle pressure of the hand, a deep
 sigh, or an oblique insinuation, which
 it was easy to evade, aided too in my
 wish by an Argus, whose vigilance has
 never slept, I came off tolerably well,
 till Thursday night, when, provoked by
 encreasing incivilities, he found himself
 compelled to announce an intention of
 taking

taking leave of us the day following ; and, before we retired, slyly stole an opportunity to slip a scrap of paper into a fold of my sleeve, unperceived even by myself, till it fell upon the ground as I was undressing for the night. The purport of the few words it contained, was merely to sue for a private conference in an early walk the next morning.

It was a request, I confess, which to grant did not exactly tally with my notions of female decorum : but my friend laughed at my prudery, and effectually combated my scruples—indeed I cannot say they were very violent, on considering that a compliance in this instance would not be to encourage, but to suppress, hopes which I saw with pain were too prone to exist on the barest shadow of a foundation. The interview took place accordingly ; but I conclude there is too great a similarity in all love stories for a recapitulation of the scene verbatim to afford you any entertainment. Suf-

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face it to say, therefore, that the gentleman expressed himself to be much enamoured—swore I was an angel, and so forth ; whilst I on my part was so ready to believe all he said, that I wondered how he could expect my divinityship to vow obedience to a mortal—jesting apart, I have had too many proofs of the sincerity of his attachment, not to wish fervently, that it may soon be eradicated from his mind, or transferred to a more deserving object, and one inclined more graciously to return the obligation.

Since the departure of our agreeable guest, all the fiends of imagination have again attacked our *pauvre malade*, and he can talk of nothing now but rheumatisms, cramps, spasms, bile, inflammations, and his divorce bill, which it seems is to be brought forward, as early as possible, in the next session of parliament. This is a new scheme, of which I have the mortification to be the parent. Is it not hard, that I should be continually
made

made the instrument of distress to my dearest friends?

Julia is now perfectly acquainted with the insanity of her father, (what word can I make use of, so applicable to his caprice?) Last night, as we were crossing the hall to our own apartment, he called her back to make her the confidante of his newly-enkindled flame.

“Julia,” said he, as soon as she was re-seated, “you never pleased me so much as in your judicious choice of a friend. Miss Worthy is a pattern for her sex; she is the most sensible young lady I ever conversed with—you must know her age, I suppose, from having been so long her school-fellow—let me see—if I were to judge from her understanding more than from her appearance, I should conclude her to be about seven or eight and twenty.”

“Dear sir,” replied his daughter, “you are greatly deceived, if such is your opinion—I do not think my friend

is herself certain as to the exact time of her birth, but if she has attained the end of her twentieth year, it is the utmost I am well convinced."

"Pshaw, pshaw, child, you might as well tell me, she was born last week.—but what signifies age?—it is maturity of judgment alone, that renders it desirable, and one woman may be as discreet at fifteen as another at five and fifty—Now tell me, *girl*, would you not be very sorry to be separated from so sweet a companion?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And would not you think me a very kind father, if I could hit upon any expedient to secure to you the constant company of so beloved a friend?"

"Cer-certainly," repeated his daughter, stammering. The dear girl honestly confessed she had too clear a presentiment of its meaning, to return a hearty affirmative to the question.

"Well,

“ Well, well,” said he, “ who knows —there can be no difficulty in obtaining a divorce, and in marrying Miss Worthy I should provide for you a different sort of a step-mother from the one you found in Lady Alicia Fitzcairn : why, you will love her *then* ten times better than you do at present.”

“ That is impossible Sir,” said she, “ I never can love Selima Worthy, under any circumstances of life, with a more ardent affection than I do at this moment : and I trust the duty and respect I bear my father, will be found equally incapable of diminution.”

“ That is a good girl July,” returned he, patting her cheek—“ but it grows late : we will talk on this subject another time—good night—be sure to commend me to your charming friend.”

Poor Julia, with a heart oppressed with chagrin and vexation, thankfully seized the first opportunity to retire ; and no sooner had she entered the room,

where I was undressing, and wondering at her absence, than she threw her arms about my neck, and burst into tears. You cannot conceive the terror which communicated itself to my breast on this extraordinary emotion ; I knew not what to conjecture ; I was, however, perfectly relieved from my concern, as soon as the matter was explained.

“ And has all this violent perturbation,” cried I, “ arisen from the apprehension of my becoming your mamma ? Fear not, I shall make a most indulgent step-mother, I assure you.”

“ How can you be so unfeeling ?” said my weeping friend ; “ you do not suppose, I hope, that I believe you capable of engaging in so disproportionate a connexion. No, Selima ; but since the unfortunate design of again uniting himself to a young wife, has taken root in his mind, are there not many girls less amiable than yourself, who for a plentiful fortune,

fortune, equipage, and attendants, would sacrifice every other consideration?"

"Your humble servant," then said I, "my sweet Julia, so by way of taking the lesser evil of the two"—

"Fie Selima, how can you laugh at my distress? do you think I could wish for the promotion of my interest at the expence of your happiness? As for your becoming the wife of my father, it is a thought which bears with it too flagrant an absurdity, to find a thought in my brain."

"Then pray" said I "do not disturb the serenity of the present moment by anticipating evils, which never may arrive."

What strange and unforeseen occurrences continually serve to prove the instability of human happiness!—Julia cannot tell, or even persuade herself, I am sure, that my absence is necessary to the peace of her mind, and a wish in me seems still more extraordinary, to
relinquish

relinquish the company of a friend so sincerely and affectionately beloved. Yet I must confess, that my visit is become irksome to me under its present circumstances, from a consciousness that it must aggravate her uneasiness: Yet to leave her without some plausible pretext is impossible, unless in order to heal one wound I would inflict another. Your counsel therefore, my friend, my guardian, and protectress, I shall impatiently await, and invariably obey. Your own

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXIX.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

SELIMA.

CAN you wonder at the instability of human happiness in the same moment which presents you so striking an instance of the imbecility of human wisdom? I do not think that Mr. Westburne's folly displays itself quite so much in his choice of a wife, as in the vanity which induces him to consider himself an acceptable husband for you; he must undoubtedly be unacquainted with your recent refusal of Mr. Hervey, who, with his advantages, has youth, a good understanding,

ing, and a handsome person to throw into the scale.

I am well aware, that your present situation is ineligible, both with regard to your friend's comforts, and your own; and therefore esteeming my life principally as it can be rendered subservient to the felicity of yours, I shall tomorrow morning, in spite of the claims which the law itself has on my attendance, commence my journey to ——shire, in order to extricate you from it. I purpose spending a few days, according to my promise, at Westburne-lodge, before we prepare for our projected Winter residence at Bath, for which, no doubt, our good friends have settled all preliminaries.

This sudden expedition leaves me no time to devote to this employment, which, as we are so soon to meet, it is unnecessary to prolong.

Inform Mr. and Miss Westburne of
my

my intention, with proper compliments,
and rest assured of the unabating affec-
tion of your

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER CXXX.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

BATH.

SINCE I wrote a few hasty lines to acquaint you of our safe arrival here, I have had an opportunity of admiring some of the beauties of this delightful place. O! that you were but with me to partake of its charms, to which the present fine weather gives the highest finish.

The zenith of the Bath season approaches, and the town is already filling very fast. This morning, with our friendly neighbours, Mr. Mrs. Poyntz, and

and the Colonel, who have hired for Mrs. Leslie the next house to their own, we took a survey of the company in the pump-room : it is an agreeable lounge, which I think I shall now and then enjoy exceedingly, when I am better acquainted with the company which frequent it. Mrs. P. knows every body, and did me the honour to introduce me to several genteel people, whose notice she esteemed particularly desirable. Unknowing and unknown as I am in the great world, little did I expect to meet an old friend on my first entrance into a public room ; and you may form an idea of my surprize, when, after having been long in doubt, I perfectly recognised the features of the late artless, good-humoured Orlando Courtley, in the figure of a pert, *self-sufficient* barrister, who is laying close siege to the lands, tenements, and hereditaments, of a wealthy heiress, endeavouring with indefatigable assiduity to obtain the pos-

session of her heart, as the master-key
 to the more valuable treasures to which
 it is annexed. This you will allow to
 be a fair conclusion, when I shall tell
 you, that forty years at least have marked
 their progress, in visible characters, on
 the brow of his dulcinea. His unex-
 pected appearance renewed many pain-
 ful sensations in my breast. I longed to
 enquire after the fortune of his amiable
 brother; whether he had left England,
 as he once proposed to do, or if his
 timely relenting destiny had spared him
 the dangers of the voyage, and united
 him to the angelic widow, who had un-
 consciously reigned the sovereign of his
 affections: yet, on the other hand, I
 dreaded engaging in a conversation,
 which must recall many events, still
 more interesting to me. But as it hap-
 pened, he left the room without per-
 ceiving me; therefore this wished-for,
 yet apprehended, conference is deferred
 to a future, though I presume not a
 very

very distant, period ; our names having been formally enrolled, our arrival announced in the news-paper, with visits from the masters of the ceremonies, &c. an how-do-ye from an old acquaintance is no more than a compliment which follows of course.

Surely so short a time never produced so lamentable a metamorphosis as is apparent in this young man ; Mrs. Leslie would scarcely be persuaded to believe, from the different manner and dress he has now adopted, that she beheld in him the lively, entertaining boy she had so much admired at Heathcott.

I have been very urgently entreated to accompany my dear guardian and her kind friends to the rooms to-night ; but with great difficulty I have got myself excused. In truth, Julia, notwithstanding the unabated flippancy of my tongue and pen, I feel a repugnance at my heart to launch again into those scenes of gaiety, which in former times have made

it bound with rapture, and which even at this moment I must acknowledge, I believe to be most congenial to my disposition; but my native vivacity is overpowered. It is not for a *murderer* to be chearful.

Under the strongest temptations of pleasure, the image of the generous soldier, who fell a sacrifice to his humanity, haunts me with particular perseverance. I confess to you, Julia, and I hope you will not lay it to the account of ingratitude, that although the death of the first friend of my deserted infancy has left an indelible regret upon my mind, it is not of so insupportable a nature as that inflicted by the untimely dissolution of an amiable young man, whom my misfortunes have precipitated to the grave, and torn from a world, which, though it might not emulate, must have revered his virtues. But fare you well—it is a duty I owe to my present dear indulgent benefactress, to struggle

gle hard for the recovery of that tranquillity which I know is necessary to hers ; and under this conviction, I make a point, whenever I fall into this melancholy train of thinking, of changing my employment to something less calculated for its indulgence ; therefore adieu, with respectful compliments to Mr. Westburne, believe me yours, more than my own,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER CXXXI.

MISS WESTBURNE.

TO

SELIMA.

MY poor father is almost out of his wits at your abrupt departure, to which he fancies I have been accessary; nor does he regard Mrs. Leslie with a greater degree of complacency. I cannot express to you how severely I felt the impropriety of that amiable lady's reception, at Westburne-lodge, on the motive of her visit being made known; but she is all goodness, and will have the charity to pity and excuse.

I have before observed, that it excited my surprise, hearing, as I frequently do,
the

the names of several respectable families in the neighbourhood, that we should have profited so little with regard to one of the first advantages of life, by their vicinity; but now the mystery is unravelled. Yesterday morning, as I rambled further than usual, tempted by a fine clear frost, which is the greatest inducement for a long walk, with little Mab by my side, a great pointer rushed out of a thicket in your favourite dingle, behind the sheep-walk, and fell furiously upon the poor animal. I shrieked violently, as you will suppose, on beholding my pet in danger of being devoured. My cries however soon brought to my assistance a civil stranger, in the habit of a clergyman, to whom it seemed the ungente beast belonged. He was accompanied by a pretty genteel young lady, who I soon afterwards discovered to be his sister, and youngest daughter to the Mr. Beaufoy, whose stately mansion enriches the view from the north front of
ours,

ours, and appears not to be above two miles from the Park. There was something extremely prepossessing in her countenance and manner, and I thought myself much obliged to this little adventure, which facilitated the commencement of an intimacy, much more than a ceremonious introduction could have done.

Her brother is not equally agreeable, though he carries with him the appearance of great worth, with a good plain understanding. Perhaps I might have painted him in higher colours, had I never seen the character of a finished gentleman so well supported in the persons of Mr. Montgomery and Lord Hazleford. I must at least do him the justice to acknowledge, that he was exceedingly polite to me, and escorted me homewards, till I was out of danger of suffering a second alarm.

During our stroll, I ventured to express my surprise, that such near neighbours

neighbours should have remained entire strangers to each other : to which Miss Amelia Beaufoy ingeniously replied, that her mother had waited upon Lady Alicia, on her marriage with my father ; but, as the compliment was neither graciously received nor returned with common civility, the visits between them were not repeated on her Ladyship's second arrival in ——shire ; adding to this, that she believed the case had been nearly the same with all the untitled gentry who had presumed to pay her their respects.

I told my father the whole history of my morning's ramble, and am not without hopes that he will some time oblige me by renewing an acquaintance with a family, of which I have received a most favourable impression. But at this moment, indeed, my principal concern is, for the health of my poor little brother ; it breaks my heart to see his strength declining daily, without the ability to render him any service : and his nurse,
though

though a good humoured, careful young woman, is as ignorant in these matters as myself. Should the life of the sweet cherub be sacrificed to neglect, mine, I am sure, would never be visited by a moment's peace. Medical assistance is necessary, I am well convinced; and my father will scarcely suffer the subject to be mentioned in his presence. But a thought this instant strikes me, which may probably be attended with success. His complaints accumulate; he fancies himself oppressed by a complication of disorders; and should I be doing wrong, think you, considering the motives by which I should be actuated, in availing myself of this infirmity of mind for the preservation of his child, and persuading him to take the opinion of a physician? The gentleman, who attended him in his last illness, is a man of approved worth, and would scorn, I doubt not, to take any improper advantage of a foible,

foible, which is evidently the principal, if not the only, malady he endures.

My dearest Selima, how I should have been delighted by the receipt of your friendly letter, but for the gloomy style in which it was written, though it was but acknowledging to me a secret into which I had too deeply penetrated before. My dear girl, need I tell you, that you must endeavour to *be* happy, not to *seem* so only, if you would effectually remove the anxiety of your friends. I am very thankful that you are now surrounded by the pleasurable scenes which Bath must hourly present, and frequently force upon your attention. They cannot surely fail in time to banish this unavailing melancholy, which secretly pursues you, and lurks in your breast, even while your countenance is irradiated with a smile. Yet, when your good sense has been exerted without success, where are we to look for a more able advocate? But tell me honestly, has that

that been literally the case? An afflicted bosom is too apt to cherish the asp which feeds upon its health; there is a soothing traitor in the indulgence of sorrow, which can silence the voice of reason, or pervert the wisdom of its arguments. No! Selima, had you submitted yourself implicitly to the government of your unbiafed understanding, you would have courted every rational amusement that could have beguiled you of a retrospective idea, instead of rejecting all, except those of which you find it absolutely necessary to partake.

Adieu! remember me in the most respectful terms to your excellent guardian; and give me a better account of your conduct in your next, or I shall be compelled to subscribe myself your offended friend——

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

I Live not for myself; it is the wish of my friends, that I should mingle in the bustling crowd; and dare I assert a sentiment of my own, when theirs, so far more estimable, are generously engaged in the regulation of my conduct? you will at least, I hope, acquit me of being obstinate in error, when I tell you I have already been in public twice: nay I rather fear indeed that you will laugh more at the instability of my mind, than you have been wont to do at what you termed its inflexibility. When I gave my con-

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sent

sent to launch my little bark into this vortex of dissipation, I stipulated for the permission to remain a spectator only of the amusements of the night ; a favour, which my kind guardian unreluctantly granted, knowing me it seems far better than I do myself ; and I am almost ashamed to acknowledge, that before the ball was over, a lively tune and an agreeable partner, supported by her renewed solicitations, overpowered all my resolute resolutions, and up I got to join the dancers ; but alas Julia ! I found not that recreation in the amusement, which a light heart only can enjoy ; and you will scarcely believe me, when I assure you, that it was with great difficulty that I got half down the set (which was a very long one) a second time ; yet this phenomenon was, I believe, more attributable to want of practice than want of strength, as I have since gone thro' much more exercise at a cotillion-ball without suffering any fatigue, except of mind ;

mind; for on that night Orlando Courtly had the honour of my hand, having, I presume, previously received the permission of his bride-elect, who on that evening did not condescend to grace the rooms with her attendance; but a maiden aunt, with whom she resides, who bears a strong resemblance of her niece, and is not apparently much older, kept a vigilant watch on the actions of her future nephew, and so entirely engross'd his attention between the dances, that had I had no other inducement for the exercise of my tongue than the conversation of my fighting partner, I might have served just as well for the emblem of a good woman, as if I had been without a head. But as I have not the ambition to aspire to so singular an honour, I ventured to console myself for the cruelty of one beau, by flirting alternately with those who were less unkind. Flirtation is a pretty harmless amusement after all Julia; and, though

I am but too sensible it cannot remove the anguish of the heart, is I believe attended with very little danger to its repose.

Orlando called on us, as I expected, as soon as he was acquainted with our arrival; and although his volubility in a private room is more intolerable than his *nonchalance* in public, he furnished me with intelligence so agreeable as on my part at least to ensure him a sincere welcome. Mrs. Leslie too, to whom I had confided the secret of Courtly's concealed attachment, earnestly rejoiced in an union, which presents so fair a prospect of mutual felicity to a worthy pair: in short, the lovely widow, for whom he so long suffered a hopeless flame, gave her hand to the honourable Charles Courtly last week, and before the expiration of this, they purpose passing through Bath on their way to Courtly Manor. You cannot imagine the delight I even now anticipate from
a meeting

a meeting with two esteemed friends, from whom I have been separated by a train of unfortunate events ; I may congratulate them on the completion of their *mutual* wishes ; for although Lady Kitley had too much purity of mind, with too high a veneration for the sacred bonds by which she was enslaved, to admit the avowal even to herself, of a passion unauthorized by them, the worm but the more unmercifully preyed upon her heart.

Mrs. Leslie has received a summons to return to London immediately, on account of this abominable law-suit, but will not comply with it, urgent as it is, till after the arrival of the bride and groom. During her absence, I am to reside with our kind neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Poyntz, who, on the moment of her design being announced, gave me an invitation in the most friendly and affectionate manner, which, as it is my dear guardian's stedfast determina-

tion that I shall not accompany her, from a mistaken idea that I should relinquish more pleasure than I could experience in the journey, I shall most gratefully accept.

I rejoice sincerely in your acquisition of a new and agreeable acquaintance, and exhort you not to let slip an opportunity of promoting so desirable an intimacy, not only in itself, but as the precursor of a more extensive society.

I am truly sorry for the indisposition of the poor baby, whose every comfort depends on the amiable sensibility of his charming sister. I cannot say I sincerely sympathized in your joy on his entrance into the world, but his endearing innocence has since obtained such an interest in my breast, that I am very anxious for his happy continuance in it, and think you have hit upon an admirable expedient to counteract the ill consequences of the neglect of one—but farewell, Julia, I am stumbling on a subject which

I am

I am perfectly sensible is too delicate for discrimination, therefore earnestly wishing your well-intended stratagem may be as successful as it is laudable, I remain sincerely yours,

SELIMA WORTHY.

Miss Westburne's answer is omitted.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

JULIA, I have so many incidents to relate, that I am absolutely at a loss how to begin my letter, though I am addressing myself to you.—

In the first place let me assure you, they have not prevented my participation of your joy on the amended health of your little darling.

The newly-married couple arrived in Bath according to our expectations—but, very contrary to our wishes, departed thence in two days afterwards; leaving us in greater concern for their absence, than

than if we had not so lately experienced the pleasure of their company ; but I have no right to complain, as the period of their stay, transient as it seemed, was almost entirely a tribute to their continued affection for the insignificant Selima.

As Orlando, who had apprized his brother and sister of my intended visit, ushered me into a room in the inn, where they alighted, the lovely bride, whom health and happiness have rendered more beautiful than ever, advanced hastily to receive me, but her lively spouse, in his usual volatile manner, catching her by the arm, cried—

“ Hold, hold, my sweet rib, for this time indulge me with the first salute of a pretty woman, and I swear to allow you the first and last word through life.

“ Bless you ; and thank you a thousand and a thousand times, my dear Miss Worthy,” exclaimed he, “ you were the guiding star which directed me to the
port

port of supreme felicity. But for your friendly consideration, I should at this moment have been far remote from all that could make life valuable—The sails were absolutely unfurling when your”—

“Come, come,” said his lady, “have some compassion on my patience: you are infringing the articles of your own agreement already—The first or last word through life indeed! if I can edge in one even in half an hour, it will be as much as I can expect—you see, my good friend, into what a cruel misfortune your mistaken kindness has precipitated me, by promoting my union with a man, who deprives me of the use of speech, by entirely monopolizing conversation himself.”

“My dear madam,” said I, returning her embrace with all the warmth of the sincere regard, which so much merit must create wherever it is known—“may you never speak of misfortunes with a countenance less serene than at this moment

ment.

ment—a moment which I have ardently wished to see : but, continued I, with a sigh, which I was unable to suppress, “ my life since our separation has been a very chequered scene, and frequently overcast with clouds so heavy and obscure, that I scarcely hoped a ray of sunshine would evermore penetrate the gloom.”

“ Indeed,” said she, tenderly, “ I greatly feared it ; though my enquiries, which, believe me, were made with unceasing diligence and anxiety, were always answered with such vague and improbable accounts, that I knew not what to think. Yet, now, my amiable Selima, when I flatter myself they are totally dispersed, would it not be an act of ingratitude towards Heaven, were you to sully the brightness of the present time by repining reflections on the past !”

“ Most certainly it would,” acknowledged I, “ and it is an offence in the commission of which I trust I am not
often

often culpable; though intervals will sometimes happen, wherein the mind cannot help reverting to the contemplation of blessings for ever lost, even in the same instant when it is surrounded by such as not only demand, but receive, the utmost gratitude of a feeling heart;" and as I spoke, a tear involuntarily dropped upon my sleeve, which is still of a fable hue, though I made some alteration in my mourning, on consenting to appear in public. This little accident, trivial as it was, raised a sympathetic emotion, and a mal-opportune melancholy was diffusing itself through the party, when the appearance of my guardian, the dear harbinger of peace, chased away the intruder.

I have since even ventured to rally poor Benedict, on the total overthrow of his valiant spirits, which were instantly routed on the dropping of a tear from a woman's eye.

" I am

"I am not ashamed of pleading guilty to the charge," returned he, "it is a weakness, which Achilles would have confessed, and none but a coward durst disown."

But my pen is running before my wits, as usual. The travellers were soon persuaded to change their quarters for my guardian's hospitable roof, for the short sojournment which prior engagements would only permit them to make in Bath; and I think I never passed two days of more rational enjoyment.

Before I had been long in company with this amiable friend, on whom, as well as on myself, returning happiness has but lately dawned, my eyes were forcibly attracted by the lustre of a ring upon her finger, which appeared to me to bear an exact resemblance of that which, in a moment of never-to-be-forgotten anguish, I left, unthought of, in that beloved asylum of my earliest in-

fancy, from which I was driven never to return. In spite of myself, I gazed on it incessantly, though a blush overspread my face whenever I was caught in the employment, from a consciousness that I had not its counterpart to produce, a dilemma from which I was but too well qualified to extricate myself by a simple narration of my pitiable adventures during the last twelve months, had not chance anticipated the design by hastening a discovery, which surprised me beyond expression. After dinner, when we were served with water, her ladyship, by whose side I had taken care to place myself, drew off her ring before she dipped her fingers in the glass, and purposely, as she has since acknowledged, threw the object of my curiosity particularly in my way. I could not resist the temptation to take it up, and examine it minutely, in doing which, guess my sensations at the moment, when the letters S. W. engraved

on

on the inside, with some other indubitable marks, convinced me it had formerly been my own.

“ Bless me !” exclaimed I, with much astonishment and some degree of confusion, “ this is the identical ring” —

“ Which I,” pursued the gentle bride, with the first ray of displeasure which I ever saw contaminate her countenance, “ once presented to a friend, who I flattered myself would have valued and preserved it for my sake.”

The tenderness of this reproof did not mitigate its poignancy ; I could not endure, even for a moment, the unmerited imputation it conveyed.

“ O !” exclaimed I, wounded to the heart, “ suspend your resentment till you know the circumstances which attended its loss. It was not the only treasure I was doomed to forfeit in that excruciating moment.”

“ I know it,” returned she, graciously taking my hand with her wonted
M 2 sweetness,

sweetness, "and from that circumstance might have been sensible, that it was cruel necessity alone, by which you had been actuated. Courtly will by and by surprize you by the restoration of another jewel, infinitely more valuable than this."

I scarcely heard what she said; my emotions grew so uncontrollable, that I could remain no longer in the room, and was followed out of it by my ever-attentive guardian, and the dear self-reproaching author of my distress, with whom, after having explained the cause of my sudden agitation to the former, and entreated her to rejoin her company, I retired into my own dressing room, where, as soon as my spirits were sufficiently recomposed, I began the mournful tale, which was to clear away the seeming ambiguity of my late conduct; but before I had proceeded far, I was interrupted by my generous auditor, affectionately

affectionately enquiring, why I did not apply to her under the difficulties which had oppressed me.

“Notwithstanding my letters never reached your hand,” said she, “you could not be ignorant of my address, at least you might have made yourself acquainted with it:” to which I had no other reply to make, but that, although I was born a beggar, my education disqualified me from pursuing a profession which was my only birth-right.

“Fie, fie, Selima,” said she, “if you can so falsely nominate the claims which one friend surely ought to have on the affection of another”—

“Pardon me, my dear madam,” entreated I, “and believe that it was not the want of properly estimating your goodness which deterred me, but—in short, I will not presume to plead a refinement, which belongs not to the poor—suffice it to say, had I not wanted

M 3

your

your assistance, I should have been more tenacious of your friendship."

Indeed the sympathetic concern she expressed on hearing the narrative of my past troubles, affected me so sensibly, that I had scarcely resolution to proceed; and no sooner had I concluded, than I took care to repress any melancholy comments which might have resulted from my story, by immediately suing for the recital of one, whose happy termination could not fail to chase away the gloomy images which had taken possession of our minds.

If I had not an admirable knack of putting to flight a melancholy thought, rising even in all the formidable majesty of woe, I know not what would become of me: my life must be a continual prey to miserable reflections; and what would be infinitely worse, the peace of my beloved guardian, through the tenderness of her affection, would inevitably fall a sacrifice to the weakness of her ward.

My

My letter to Courtly, as premised already, reached his hands in the very instant most critical to his future fate; for the ship, in which he was to have embarked, sailed for the East Indies in less than five hours after he had received intelligence, which caused a total subversion of his plans, and determined him at all events not to quit a land in which there was now a dawning possibility, at least, of his enjoying more substantial happiness than fame or fortune in any other country could bestow; and under this generous enthusiasm, inspired by his new-born hopes, thought himself singularly fortunate in being able to present his commission in the army, with his naval stores, to a poor young man, who was gratefully ready to accept them upon so short a notice. On his return home, he happened to miss his way in an *unaccountable manner*, and found himself within a mile of the family-seat of his adored widow. Compliments of condolence,

lence, with enquiries after her health,
 were no more than attentions indispen-
 sibly necessary, according to the com-
 mon laws of politeness and etiquette:
 strange, unforeseen accidents of this
 nature continually occurring, and Fate
 seeming determined on their union, it
 was thought most adviseable not to op-
 pose her decree, and in a few days af-
 ter the expiration of the year of her
 widowhood, the charming relict, with a
 joyful heart, presented her hand at the
 altar a second time, with the perfect ap-
 probation of her father, who is more
 satisfied with the family, fortune and
 character of his present son-in-law, than
 he had formerly been with those of the
 man, to whose brutality he sacrificed
 (as it happened) but the temporary feli-
 city of his artless child, whom youth
 and inexperience rendered an easy victim
 to this unjust extension of parental au-
 thority.

Ah,

“ Ah, Selima !” exclaimed she, when arrived at this period of her history, “ I should not have been fully sensible of the sublime delight of pledging my faith to the man who was master of my affections, had I not been made to suffer the horrible reserve. Do you know, that it was from an expression of yours, dropped in a conversation between us at Foxhunter’s-hall, that I first learnt the true nature of the partiality which had stolen imperceptibly into my heart, and from the moment of the discovery, my feelings were such as it is impossible to describe. I regarded myself as a guilty wretch, in the continual commission of a crime, which, involuntary as it was, called upon me the severest penalty which self-accusation could inflict. But, by following the digression of my fair historian, I am retarding the explanation of an incident for which, if I may form a judgment on self-evident principles, your curiosity is at this moment on the rack.

rack. Briefly then, as the happy pair were making purchases, and giving directions in a celebrated shop, in — street, preparatory to their ensuing nuptials, the ring, which I conclude has raised your curiosity little less than it did mine, fell into the hands of its first owner, and with it the gold repeating-watch presented to me by my dear lamented benefactress, on my last return from school, which, according to the jeweller's account, he likewise bought of a pawn-broker, with whom it had been left, long after the time appointed for its ransom; and though my good friends took upon themselves the trouble of interrogating this person minutely on the subject, these were all the particulars they could possibly obtain. As for their own reflections on the transaction, as you may imagine, they were very vague, and sometimes led them to condemn, but oftener to compassionate, the poor wretch, who had been induced, from
any

any motive whatsoever, to relinquish such inestimable pledges of sincere regard.—But I need not offer a more incontestible proof of the magnanimity of their minds, than the generous wish, which instantly possessed them, to secure at least a remote probability of restoring them to their former owner, and under that sentiment Mr. Courtly purchased the watch, and his lady the ring, both which they have kindly obliged me to accept. From this circumstance, I think Mrs. Woodley's treachery is clearly demonstrable. Gracious Heavens! what an egregious dupe have I been to artifice and hypocrisy—perhaps! But it is not for me to reflect minutely upon past occurrences, but to regard with humble thankfulness the present.

Would you believe it, Julia? Mrs. Leslie has taken away the watch she gave me, because she says it has now a rival, with which she knows it cannot keep *time* in my affections: this is not a
topic

topic for disquisition: most true it is, that the only relic of the tender partiality of a deceased friend, to whose maternal care I owe more than my being, is to me a jewel of inestimable worth; nor were it otherwise, should I possess the esteem of my present protectress, in the liberal measure in which she bestows it upon me.

These vile lawyers have once more bereft me of her society: I think I before mentioned to you that she only waited the arrival of our expected friends; and their carriages quitted the door at the same hour this morning, though their route was different: the loss I had sustained overwhelmed me with a stupidity, which I could neither conquer nor disguise; a consequence which they had the consideration to foresee, and strove to obviate it by extorting from me a promise, before we parted, to accompany Mrs. Poyntz to the assembly this evening, and as I do not hold it

good

good to nurse the ugly offspring of discontent and disappointment, I will endeavour to fulfil it with a tolerable grace.

Courtly, during his transitory sojournment at Bath, interrogated me concerning the magnet, which had so irresistibly attracted Orlando to this place, when the duties of his profession had such strong claims on his attendance elsewhere.

"Though I must confess," added he, with a bow, "the question is rather a superfluous one in the presence of Miss Worthy."

"Dear sir," returned I, laughing, "*you are the very pine-apple of politeness* ; but you shall not avail yourself of flattery to fix so unmerited a charge upon me. Your brother has a better apology for his continuance here than that which you have been so kind to assist him with, I assure you."

And, true to my sex, I was going to blab the whole history of Miss Brown and her Acres at a breath, but, like lady

Townly, I gave a seasonable hem, and caught the ugly words before they had escaped.

“Of that,” said he, “you will permit me to be the judge, when I am better acquainted with its complexion.”

“For all further particulars,” returned I, “I refer you to a party concerned: it is not for me to speak upon a subject in which I have only common fame for my authority.”—I was aware that I had said too much, and as I could not extricate myself, all I had to do was to avoid falling deeper into the net I had entwined; but as it happened, I was fortunate enough to do no mischief; for on the day following, the secret was ceremoniously revealed, the lady was introduced, and we all waited upon her in form, as the future bride of our respected relative and friend, Orlando Courtly. The character the lady affects, I perceive, is that of a woman of extensive reading and profound knowledge. Men of letters

ters and women of literature are the only people of, or with, whom she will condescend to converse, therefore I had little chance of gleaning much edification from her erudition. Courtly has conceived an invincible abhorrence towards his sister-elect, and feels himself greatly scandalized by the fordid disposition of his brother. I can now account for the tropes and syllogisms which have of late so profusely decorated the language of this once agreeable young man.

But I am throwing away my precious time upon you without reserving a decent portion for the indispensable rites of the toilet: having particular execution to perform at the ball to night, I ought to be in full dress and full spirits for the purpose; and as the latter is an advantage I despair of obtaining, all my hopes of success must be centered in the former.

You must know, that the last time I was in public, a pert officer made his appearance,

pearance ; a smart, pretty fellow, I must confess. At first sight, I should have thought I had seen his face before, had it not been for a scar over his left eye, on which he wears a most becoming black patch—but it must be some remote resemblance, for I certainly never saw so fine a face, with so intelligent a countenance, which is very candid in me to acknowledge ; for I cannot receive much pleasure in enumerating the charms of a creature who might have been introduced to me, and not only rejected, but absolutely scorned the honour of my acquaintance.

“ Shield me,” exclaimed he, with a conceited shrug, “ from a Bath beauty !” —As Cornet Smith, whose principal employment it is to shew the lions, was describing to him the curiosities of the place :

“ That is to say,” continued he, “ a creature made up of airs and affectation, more fantastical than a monkey, more
vain

vain than a peacock, more noisy than a parrot, more changeable than the camelion, and more rapacious of admiration than a hawk of his prey:—if she were not born an idiot, you have taken an effectual method to make her one.—No, no, let us cross the room; there is a little modest-looking girl in the corner yonder, who seems to have no pretensions whatsoever.—Tell me her name, and I will pay my respects to her forthwith.”

Was there ever any thing so horridly scurrilous? Part of this elegant discourse I overheard, unconscious of being the subject of it, but the gentleman to whom it was addressed, had too much friendly malice to suffer me to remain in doubt to whom the compliment appertained. Well, if I do not humble the pride of this redoubtable hero, all the tricks which art and nature ever bestowed upon woman to assail the heart of man, shall be exerted in vain; tho’

the wretch had some reasons in his observations, I confess, for the people are making a fool of me as fast as they can, and find me docible enough, I fear, in receiving their instructions: in short, I happen to be the whim of the moment; my dress, actions, words, and even thoughts, if any body has the penetration to discover them before they are uttered, become an established mode immediately: but what you will join with me in thinking most singularly ridiculous, is, that because my hair has not sufficiently recovered the

“ Conq’ring force of unresisted steel,”

to reach the top of my stays, when it hangs in ringlets, all the misses on the banks of the Avon have laid aside their braids, or in those cases where Nature has rendered such an artificial ornament unnecessary, they have actually cut off their flowing tresses, to reduce them to the growth of mine. How is it possible

fible to keep ones wits, when there are so many who want them? But thank Heaven! vanity is no argument of idiotism, notwithstanding the shrewd remark of this military cynic, or the wisdom of many a grave philosopher might be called in question. Did not Minerva herself throw away her pipe, because it distorted her features, which I do not recollect as having been eminent for their beauty, though *so nearly related to myself?*

A woman never reflects how time passes, whilst she prates or scribbles *c'est la meme chose n'est il pas?* Yours, ever affectionately,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXIV.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. V. MONTGOMERY.

I Have seen my cousins, and like them both, but do not intend to marry either. My good uncle's precaution of keeping us separate by design, and suffering us to meet by accident, has not been crowned with the success he predicted. But we knew the plan; and that knowledge operating on the spirit of contradiction, inherent in human nature, was sufficient to render it abortive. One of the ladies is very fair, and very tall; the other is not quite so fair, nor quite so tall, but

is

is the most pleasing of the two: they are, as you will suppose, perfectly skilled in all the fashionable accomplishments: in short, Pope has already described them better than I can, and on my own part, I shall only add that, such as they are,

“ I'll none of them ;”

No, give me the girl who has spirit enough to break the heart of the man she hates, or to charm and delight the soul of him she loves. Could I but meet with such a woman, then to become the happy object of her preference must be my second consideration. My wife, Valtimond, shall never accompany me to the altar, to oblige her papa and mama—

O grant, ye gods! all I ask,

A woman frank and free,

One who will not perform a task

In pleasing me ;

Whose faithful heart's the genuine spring

By which her actions move,

And proves in ev'ry trivial thing

Her truth and love.

May

May wisdom on her steps attend,
 And be her constant guide,
 So may I find a social friend.
 In my fair bride.

And whilst her oath of constant love
 Does all her actions sway,
 Then I'll forget (my own to prove)
 The word obey!

I am in some danger of falling in love you will say, as the frenzy of poetry has caught hold of me; but that does not always follow, for I was violently enraptured on my first interview with Lady Margaret; the muse tickled my elbow, and down I sat in an instant to my writing-desk, but the devil a word could I find to say about her, but what was so common-place as to seem beneath my notice. My goddess was a fair goddess to be sure, but so was Helen of Greece, so was Andromache of Troy, so was Dido, so was Roxana, Statira, and Cowslip the dairy-maid; and so has been every goddess, mortal or immortal, of whatever age or country, handed down from

from the remotest antiquity to the present day, at least that I recollect, except the Egyptian Queen : so that had my divinity been a brown divinity, possibly she might have been more agreeable to my muse. I danced with her last night for the second time, not having many acquaintance here. There is a devilish pretty girl in the place, with whom I should have been enchanted at the first glance, had not her name been so confoundedly buzzed in my ears from morning till night, that I was out of conceit with her features before I beheld them ; but I believe I am within an ace of becoming a profelyte to the public opinion, with which I am commonly at variance you know. I have hitherto possessed an unconquerable aversion to a celebrated beauty : but when my partner, who did not arrive till country dances were begun, placed herself at the bottom of the set in conformity with the rules, this fair idol insisted on relinquishing her
place

place with as much humility as if she had never been deified; an offer which, to my infinite chagrin was instantly accepted with far less good-breeding than it was made.

This little incident, with her every action, which I had an opportunity of observing, was easy and unaffected, wrought such a revolution in my sentiments, that I suffered myself to be introduced to her, and am to have the honour of her hand at the cotillion ball on Thursday, where they say she acquits herself with a peculiar grace. If this creature should prove superior to the ill effects of universal admiration and idolatry, she must be a being somewhat above the common race of mortals.—*Well nous verrons*—In the mean time, to you who at present hold the first place in my affections, I remain, most devotedly,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER.

LETTER CXXXV.

MISS WESTBURNE.

TO

SELIMA.

ACCEPT my best thanks for your long epistle, which being no more than a morning's work, must establish your credit as having the pen of a ready writer. I fear you will esteem such praise as a very cold return for so kind an attention to an absent friend : but if it freezes as hard at Bath as it does here, you will find a sufficient excuse in the sterility of the atmosphere for the frigidity of my expressions ; though my heart beats with its usual warmth, its emotions lose their energy as they are

deffeminated into language.—In short, words are but poor vehicles of sentiments, and I will no longer pretend to employ them in their conveyance, particularly when I am furnished with so delightful a subject for congratulation in the union of a worthy couple, in whose felicity you are so tenderly interested. Another occurrence from a very different quarter, and fraught with far less pleasurable communication, which may at this moment afford employment for my pen, is the receipt of a letter from my lately criminal, but now penitential, step-mother, who, deserted by her infamous seducer, and refused the smallest degree of succour from her incensed relations, has been driven, as the last resource, to apply to me, to save her from perishing, for want of the common necessaries of life, at *Amiens*, from whence she writes, describing her situation to be as lamentable an one, as sickness and poverty united in a strange country can produce.

I have

I have been greatly at a loss how to act on the occasion, but as the exigence was so pressing, delayed not to render her what pecuniary assistance was in my power : but that must be too temporary a relief either to answer her wants or my wishes to serve the indigent, from whencesoever their distresses may have sprung : it is neither for me to judge nor to correct them.

The physician who attends my father has for some time been very urgent with him to try the efficacy of a warmer climate, thinking change of scene no less necessary to the restoration of his spirits, than a milder atmosphere is to the support of the delicate constitution of his infant son ; and this matter was almost determined upon before the unexpected arrival of the letter above mentioned.—

That circumstance deranges all my plans, and I am more than half-inclined to labour now as indefatigably to counteract my own designs, as I had before

done for their advancement. Though I should truly rejoice in administering any personal aid to this poor victim of her own indiscretion : to subject my unfortunate father to an interview with a woman, to whose wickedness and folly his peace of mind has been so cruelly sacrificed, would be an act of temerity, which, whatever might be the consequences of it, could reflect no credit upon me. Favour me with your advice in this dilemma, for I never felt myself more in want of the guidance of a better judgment than my own.

I cannot have the inhumanity to wish you success in your premeditated vengeance on the heart of the indignant soldier, who, whatever may be his fame in war, will prove but a bully, I make no doubt, in his resistance to the attacks of Cupid, and has unfortunately an enemy to encounter, who keeps the little
archer

archer so closely attached to her side,
that his darts can never recoil upon her-
self.

I sympathise with you in your present
loss (temporary as I trust it will prove)
of the agreeable society of your worthy
friend, though not without an earnest
prayer, that your uneasinesses (for such
things will occur in the fairest volume of
the book of life) may never proceed
from a cause more ~~troublesome~~.

Yours, sincerely,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER CXXXVI.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

DEAR Julia, you distress me by requesting a favour which is not within my abilities to grant. Friendship must be as blind as love if it really disposes you to believe me capable of yielding you proper counsel in the delicate situation in which your step-mother's strange application has involved you : an application, which, I must however venture to observe, favours too much of confidence to be allied to a truly contrite heart.— Were there the remotest probability that
your

your kindness and example might withdraw her from the errors of her own misguided mind, it were an undertaking most worthy of you; and the truest benevolence unquestionably consists in forgiving those trespasses, by which we are most materially injured. But your own feelings, my dear girl, and the good judgment with which you are capable of regulating them, must alone direct you in this extraordinary conjuncture, which is of too delicate a nature for the interference of one, who, though deeply interested in your happiness, possesses neither discretion nor experience adequate to the task. We are deprived of the company of poor Orlando, by a most melancholy event. A messenger, who met his brother and sister on the road, brought him an account of the sudden death of his father not many hours after their departure.

I attended Mrs. Poyntz to the dressed-ball, at the Old Rooms, on Monday,
without

without any terrible consequence ensuing from my avowed hostile intentions against the flinty heart of the redoubtable man of war, ycleped captain Henry Talbot, whom my pen has in some sort introduced to your acquaintance. Chance performed wonders in my favour, by placing me close on the right wing of the enemy, and thereby giving me an opportunity to observe his every gesture. Conscious that as a poor deserted roundling, existing upon the bounty of the humane, I have no right to any place whatever, I always take care to occupy the lowest in the room, a situation to which, for that time, as the whimsical dame had contrived for the accomplishment of my purpose, I presume, his fair partner and cousin, lady Margaret Talbot, who did not arrive till the country dances were begun, was reduced by the established rules, which are never suffered to be violated here. Yet these advantages availed me nothing;
the.

the events of the morning still hung heavy on my mind, and my spirits were not in tune for coquetry. Not a string could I touch with effect, which had power to animate the cold heart of this proud insensible; but I will not abuse him, for he did not find me quite so repugnant to his state on a nearer interview, as his saucy imagination had described: for before the ball was over, he even condescended to solicit the honour of my hand for cotillions on Thursday; a favour which, I fear, was granted with an air of satisfaction, too clearly demonstrable of the inward triumph I enjoyed. I am a wretched bungler in the art of dissimulation, and always forget the necessity of disguising my sentiments, by the management of my features, till the secret is discovered, and the precaution useless. Thursday night is also over, as the date of this informs you; yet the hero is safe, and all my well-concerted schemes unexecuted as before

before, though I sallied forth armed *cap-a-pee*, pre-determined to have no mercy on the foe ; but alas ! my treacherous memory again deserted me on the field, and I never once recollected that he was one, till the evening was too far advanced for beginning my manœuvres with any prospect of success. The true state of the case is this ; the creature is endowed by Nature with an uncommon share of good sense, and I believe it is not in the power of woman to deprive him of it. In spite of prejudice, I confess, that his address is most singularly engaging, and I must acknowledge, that I never saw any one, who, in person and manners, can bear the smallest degree of comparison with him, except one, and that one I almost shudder to say, is Lord Hazleford, from a fear that their minds may second the similitude manifest in their persons ; a similitude, which notwithstanding admits of great superiority in favour of my new acquaintance,

acquaintance, whose figure is much finer, and in whose countenance, which beams with more intelligence and animation, an open artlessness is diffused, to crush suspicion in the birth : in truth, I like him well enough, earnestly to wish, that his "soul may keep the promise we have from his face."

But a letter from my dear guardian is this moment delivered, which I must peruse, and then prepare for dinner. My good host and hostess expect much company; and the evening is to conclude with *harmony* in every sense of the word, I make no doubt; for this is its favourite abode.

Has your father given up his house in Clarges-street? Might not a Winter's residence in our own metropolis, be as efficacious to his spirits, as a warmer climate, which does not seem well calculated to invigorate his nerves?

Will you not laugh, when I own, that I am afraid of your leaving England?

Yet

Yet I know not why : for what does it
 signify, whether it be by land or sea
 that our persons are separated, while
 friendship indissoluble still “twines our
 hearts in one?” Yours alike, through
 all changes and vicissitudes of life,

SELI MA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXVII.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. V. MONTGOMERY.

I Scarcely know how to direct my letter with a prospect of your receiving it; yet I am compelled to write, for I can find no other consolation for my perturbed spirits, whilst I am absent from the cause of their disquietude. Valtimond, I can never ridicule thee more; for I am fallen into the same toils, and, as an irrefragable argument of my folly, I have fallen in to them with my, eyes open, and, warned on all quarters of the danger, which nevertheless I had the temerity to

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encounter:

encounter : in a word, I fulfilled my engagement with the most angelic creature in the creation ; and the natural consequence was, that from that moment I became her slave, and hang me, if I would exchange my present bondage for the recovery of the ignoble freedom of which I have been so lately vain. No, my dear fellow, as a partner in the pleasing pain, thou wilt easily believe me, when I swear, that I would rather *kiss the rod* than fly from the correction.— Selima Worthy is the name of my enchantress ; a name to which she has an acknowledged right, though its derivation is unknown. I overheard lady Almeria enquire of Jack Smith, who the girl was who danced with her cousin Harry ; to which the reptile replied, with a grin,

“ Egad, your ladyship has honoured me with a task which I fear it is beyond my abilities to perform ; though pardon me, on second thoughts, the difficulty would

would be to discover whom the lady *has* been, for at present it is pretty evident that she *is* the humble friend of a rich widow in the Circus."

"Humble friend! he, he, he!—go, you scandalous creature; upon my life, you are too bad: but tell me seriously now, are you sure she is no-body?"

I heard no more: the conversation was so little to my taste, that I walked away, and was gratified with one of a very different nature with the sweet, unconscious subject of their impertinence. As for my fair relative, how I should exult in making her understand, that this *humble friend!* *this no-body!* must attribute it wholly to herself, if she does not surpass her ladyship in rank and fortune, though not in proportion with her extraordinary excellence in every accomplishment which can dignify the mind of woman. Where all the advantages are possessed, which noble blood or ancestry can impart, what the devil does it

signify from whence they are derived!—
 Heaven grant that this lovely girl may
 esteem them worth her acceptance.—
 Yet, Oh! my friend! how could I ever
 bear to consider myself as the mere
 appendage to these superficial toys.

You have often told me that true love
 and diffidence are inseparably allied, and
 I now begin to feel the justice of the ob-
 servation: whatever good or evil conse-
 quences I may experience in future from
 the irresistible passion, it has already the
 merit of having metamorphosed me into
 a very modest fellow—Fear having ob-
 tained such an ascendancy over Hope in-
 my breast, that I am half-ready to appre-
 hend a successful rival in every pert cox-
 comb that I meet: yet, notwithstanding
 my humility, I have had the puppyism to
 flatter myself, that my attentions to this
 charming object of universal approba-
 tion, were far from ungraciously receiv-
 ed:—nay, I have even fancied I beheld
 a ray

a ray of pleasure sparkle in her intelligent eyes on my approach, and a soft tinge of melancholy diffuse itself over her countenance, when unfeeling Time has compelled me to tear myself away. The other day, I had the honour of a polite invitation to dinner, and a private concert in the evening, from the gentleman at whose house she resides during the absence of her friend, and to whom I had but just got myself introduced.—My appearance therefore was totally unexpected on her part, and the blush of surprize it occasioned, I had actually the presumption to interpret into an expression of emotion, such as frequently pervades my breast, since my first acquaintance with this lovely woman.—Her execution on the harpsichord is exquisitely fine; and for her singing! no fyren ever so truly possessed the faculty of charming the senses of mankind; yet there was a tremour in her cadences

which made her much dissatisfied with her own performance, whilst to me it seemed to indicate a sensibility, which encreased the rapture of my soul. But, alas! the season of rapture is expired; my own egregious folly has awakened me from this dream of happiness, and plunged me in the abyss of despair. I am sensible I shall be doing thy friendly “*ear some violence to make it truster of my own report against myself,*” when I acknowledge, that, by a drunken frolick, I have, myself, drawn a curtain to intercept this dawning prospect of felicity, I fear, forever from my sight. Yesterday, happening to dine at an ordinary with a party of choice spirits, and blest with a promise of Miss Worthy’s hand for country dances in the evening, when called upon for a toast, was it not natural for me to give the lovely mistress of my heart? in short, was it possible to do otherwise? Yet on this incident my
evil

evil-genius found means to work its ascendancy over my fate, for scarcely had the magical sentence passed my lips, before I was challenged to drink the lady's health in a pint bumper: it was not in man, at least it was not in a lover, to refuse—had it been a gallon I should have complied, nor should I have suffered more from my acquiescence. My reason, unused to brave the shocks of this species of excess, soon gave way to its opponent, and left me to the poor, negative, good fortune, of being entirely disabled from rendering myself contemptible and ridiculous to her, in whose breast I so ardently wish to excite the sentiments of affection and esteem; a just resentment is now therefore the only punishment I have to apprehend. Is it not vexatious, that in the infancy of our acquaintance she should have received so false an impression of my character?—You, who know my usual temperance, will

will have compassion on my situation—I know not what to do; full of impatience to confess my fault, attest my penitence, and sue to be forgiven, I have not courage for the enterprize; besides a stupifying head-ache, eyes sunken, and hands trembling, are relicks of inebriety too flagrant to suffer me to plead successfully under their influence in my own behalf.

Jack Smith, who has just been here, would fain persuade me, that my absence was regretted; but my reason is not so utterly dethroned, as to suffer me to give credit to the flattering insinuations of such a time-serving sycophant.

That Selima however declined dancing for the evening, and permitted not any happier man to triumph in my disappointment, is a truth too publickly proved even for my *humility* to question.

I shall direct to you at Florence; as, from the date of your last, with the intended

tended disposal of your time, that seems most probably to be the place of your sojournment at present.

Thine no less from being a sufferer in the same cause,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CXXXVIII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

THIS important matter, in which my judgment has been so indecisive, is at length determined without my opinion being considered as a necessary preliminary to its execution.

My father, already persuaded that from a change of air alone he may hope for the removal of the numerous maladies under which he seems to labour, is so resolved upon the scheme, that I really believe its prevention might be seriously detrimental to his health, especially after having been so recently thwarted in his favourite

favourite design, which I may now confess to you was to pay a visit to a renowned city, which happens to be the present residence of a fair lady, whose name I think you will be able to divine without the help even of its initials from my pen. To chance, therefore, I must in a great measure now submit the arrangement of my future plans, particularly with regard to the miserable culprit, whom I would fain preserve from becoming a victim to her former crimes, or by necessity's iron-hand being driven into a renewal of them.

I knew that you would sympathise in my compassion, and exemplify your own apothegm,

“ That unfeign'd charity is unconfin'd,
 “ And cherishes alike all human kind.”

My beloved Selima, how pleasantly your time now glides along, and how delighted is your friend once more to behold you in that sphere of life, in
 which

which it is beyond a doubt you were designed by Providence to move the envy and admiration of the world: and what appears almost miraculous, you have escaped uncontaminated the subtle poison of universal adulation.

Your description of your agreeable, new acquaintance, has wrought upon my mind so strong a disposition to admire him, that I begin to tremble for his peace. For mercy's sake, if he is a man of sentiment, beware of inflicting a wound, which you will not have the humanity to assuage. There is something so incomprehensible in this part of your character, that I should not be surprized to find by the next post, the gentleman's esteem for you being cherished into a tenderer attachment, that your good opinion of him, which is now bordering upon an animated regard, should then be transformed into the most unaccountable disgust.

You

You must excuse a short epistle, now-and-then, my dear girl, when you reflect on the scanty materials with which I am furnished for their fabrication. Alas! I fear I want the heavenly sense "To find tongues in trees, books in the running-brook, sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Yet in truth I often moralize, tho' I fear it is but a dernier resort to fill up time. There are, however, who act, as well as those who can better reason on their actions. May I be one! Then shall I never doubt that the gracious Selima will still preserve a warm corner in her heart for her unlearned, but guileless and unalienable, friend

JULIA WESTBURNE.

P. S. Is it not strange that I could conclude my letter without recollecting to inform you, that unless you write before the 18th of this instant, I shall not hear from you again, before we begin our journey? Nevertheless such is the

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situation

situation of affairs ; therefore I pray thee delay not a timely visitation to thy writing-desk, and in order to suppress any uneasy thought on the increased distance of our separation, fail not to entertain a steadfast belief, that oceans rolling between us can never wash away an atom of that affection, which from infancy has been implanted in our hearts,

LETTER.

LETTER CXXXIX.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

FIE, fie, you flatterer! Could I have thought that Julia would take the part of my most dangerous enemies, and with them endeavour to persuade me to forget myself! The only compliment you pay me, which I can without a blush receive, is, that I am yet uncontaminated by the subtle poison of adulation: but if you unkindly contribute to sweeten the seducing cup, how long may I be safe? Let me entreat you to spare me through the sincerity of your friendship. Flattery is sometimes agreeable to me, I confess;

Q²

but

but then it is taken as other amusements incident to the times, which merely serve to enliven the present hour without leaving any impression on the mind ; but such is not the gratification I ever wish to derive from your affection.

It is happy for me, perhaps, that I have just suffered a degree of humiliation, which may prove a timely antidote to the baneful effects of this pernicious drug. Yet why should I employ a thought on trifling mortifications, whilst grief, occasioned by your approaching banishment to a foreign clime, predominates in my breast ; though I think you will acknowledge that I have sufficient cause for chagrin, whilst you have little indeed to excite your tremours for the peace of an inconsistent man. I have at last met with a mortal as incomprehensible as myself at least. You will scarcely believe me, I suppose, when I tell you that I was engaged to dance with captain Talbot, at the Upper Rooms, last night,
and

and that he never appeared to claim the performance of my promise, or even sent an apology for his neglect; and I sat still the whole evening, thinking he was sure to arrive before the end of it; or in case he should not, fully determined that his incivility should not find a sanction in mine.

What favourable conjectures can I form on such extraordinary behaviour? Indeed I begin seriously to fear that a second lord Hazleford lurks beneath the specious appearance of a prepossessing figure: yet a conversation I accidentally over-heard in the Pump-room ought to arrest my judgment, and secure him from the injustice of too hasty a condemnation.

“Can you tell me, where Harry Talbot is to be found, or if he is still in Bath,” demanded a gentleman near me, addressing himself to Mr. Poyntz.

“Certainly,” returned the latter, his lodgings are on the North Parade, and I hope he has no immediate inten-

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tion to desert us; for he is the life and spirit of the place—Are you well acquainted with him?”

“Not better with myself;” was the reply to this interrogation; “and I will venture to affirm,” added the stranger, “that the worthiness of his heart is calculated to reflect lustre on the pleasantries of his manners.”

Not long afterwards my good friend approached me with the gentleman by the arm, and, as he introduced him to me, took an opportunity, in a half-whisper, to hint, that his particular intimacy with Captain Talbot, he presumed, would not render his acquaintance less acceptable to me. This saucy insinuation called such a glow of confusion into my face that I could scarcely speak; and I looked so like an idiot that, at that moment, I had little chance of rendering myself *acceptable* to any one. It is strange that such an absurd idea could find admittance into his brain; and,

and still stranger that he should make so ill-timed a disclosure of it. Nay, what is most intolerably provoking, all the world has had the malice to teize me about the man, since they have witnessed the public indignity with which I have been treated. Well, I do not care—I dare say he has left Bath, and ten to one I shall never see him again—I thank my stars it is a loss I can very easily survive. Yoo, yoo, I am convinced it must be so; for yesterday, the morning being fine, little Lucy Poyntz and I strolled about from place to place, and this son of Mars was invisible *partout*—Not that I went to look after him, be assured;—No woman likes to be slighted; otherwise it is a matter of such utter indifference to me---Bless me! there is a violent rap at the door:—By your leave, whilst I just step to the window to see who it is:—

Talbot, as I live!—Surely they will not deny me, because all the rest of the family

family are from home. I do not believe a creature knows that I am in the house besides Mary. Dear, dear, he will think he has offended beyond forgiveness; and you know one should not like to be thought a virago. No, no, he is let in, and I am called to attend him in the parlour.

Well, Julia, the offender is forgiven, though the offence was a disgraceful one I confess; but then the candour of the confession, with the unaffected contrition with which it was accompanied! Had you been in my place you would not have been inexorable. Besides I was myself the occasion of the fault, with the assistance of an impertinent fellow, who haunts me like my shadow—He was always my aversion, and now I shall hate him ten times worse than I did before.

Talbot swears he will never drink my health again, as he thinks it a very poor compliment to any woman for a man to degrade

degrade himself to the level of a brute to do her homage ; and shall, henceforward, content himself with such a toast as will merely prove an “ excuse for the glass.” But I cannot stay another moment. I had not time to resume my pen before dinner, and now tea and coffee are served up, and the pardoned swain waiting to accompany us to the Concert.

If I write any time tomorrow my letter will not fail to reach you before the day which, though marked with dismal characters on my side of the leaf, will, I trust, on yours be found replete with all the smiling auspices of pleasure and delight.

SELIMA IN CONTINUATION.

HOW thankful am I that you are still in England—that I have yet an opportunity to confide in your breast the unexpected occurrences which agitate my own.

O ! Julia !

O! Julia!—Talbot—I cannot proceed till my full bosom has found relief in the flood of tears which is, at this moment, streaming from my eyes.

Talbot loves me, Julia—And I now find I could not have been happy had I failed to make an impression on his heart—For mine, I now confess, has inadvertently become his captive. Are you not amazed at the acknowledgment? How Mrs. Leslie will be delighted. Yet, though I am perfectly well acquainted with her sentiments, I dare not inform her of the conversion wrought in mine, after what has passed between us on the subject, till I can present her my apology in my hand.

You will not suspect me, I hope, of having betrayed all this weakness to the author of it, because I am so ingenuous to you. Indeed I seem to have been in a dream, and this incoherent scrawl will be but a poor testimony that I am now awake.

We

We were going to the Concert, you know, where the music was good, and the evening passed away apparently to the general satisfaction of the company.

As for Captain Talbot and myself, we are both such violent amateurs of this charming science, that we absolutely paid little less attention to the orchestra than to each other, till a booted messenger made loud inquiries for my neighbour, and being soon directed to him, presented a letter, which had been sent express from his uncle Lord Fitzalwine, entreating his immediate attendance at the borough of ———; a seat in Parliament being vacated by the death of one of the representatives of that place, to which it is his ardent wish that his nephew should succeed. Talbot looked as if a ghost had crossed him. I thought he had received intelligence of the death of some near relation or esteemed friend, and anxiously inquired if there was any real foundation for the conjecture. He answered

answered me only by giving me the letter to peruse ; and then casting his eyes on my face with more than usual expression in his countenance,

“ Would you have me go, Miss Worthy ? ”

In any other case I should have laughed at so pathetic an interrogation ; but in this I felt the force of it too much (without hesitation) to utter a syllable in return.

“ You are master of your own actions, I presume ; ” said I, stammering ; “ but if you ask my opinion, I say, most certainly ; nor do I see how you could possibly refuse to comply with a request which has your own honour entirely for its motive.”

“ Cruel Selima ! ” exclaimed he, “ with what an unfeeling *nonchalance* you can join in banishing from your presence a man, to whom the dissolution of soul and body is a pang he would much less tremble to encounter : but I cannot leave you
in

in suspense. Let me know the worst at once; tell me, that you wish me gone never to return, and there being no alternative, I must submit to the rigour of my fate."

Terrified at his vehemence, which I thought would draw upon us the observation of the company,

"What would you have me say, Captain Talbot?" demanded I,

"Only that you do not particularly desire my absence;"

"Indeed I do not," most sincerely, I replied;

"And that if I do go, you will not be displeased at my return," still catechised my inquisitor;

"So far from it," returned I, "that I shall hold myself engaged to dance with you at the first ball after your arrival, and shall expect that honour with"—impatience I was going to say, but I found my heart was approaching too near my lips; and though at that mo-

ment I was little suspicious of the impulse by which it was actuated, I was aware that there would be more candour than propriety in such an acknowledgment. The sentence however did not long remain unfinished—Vanity, which reigns with equal sway in male and female, soon supplied it with the natural conclusion, which my precaution had with-held.

“ Good Heavens !” exclaimed he in an extacy—“ Was not impatience the word that would have followed ? Ah ! wherefore restrain the generosity of your heart ? Can it be possible ? Would you expect me with impatience ? Speak, my angel, I will not abuse your confidence.”

You may be assured, that I was steadfastly determined not to confirm the conjecture, but to utter a direct falsehood was not in my power, and I fear my blushes and confusion betrayed my sentiments

sentiments more effectually than language could have done.

Luckily the concert ended, and gave some relief to my embarrassment, but Talbot accompanied us home to supper, and, conscious of my own folly, I could not recover my usual composure in his presence. In short, I felt an oppression on my spirits of a nature which I never was sensible of before ; and what is still more extraordinary, to him, with whom I had always conversed with the most ease and cheerfulness, I was most particularly, though unintentionally, reserved. To add to my chagrin, I was asked many *mal-opportune* questions concerning the music we had attended, to which I could make no rational reply, for I really did not recollect one piece that had been played during the latter part of the performance. Talbot was exactly under the same predicament ; but thinking to extricate himself with more adroitness than I had done, plunged into a most

egregious blunder, at which all the company laughed aloud: the gentlemen at the same time provokingly observing, that the mistake was very pardonable, and that any man would have been proud of so fair an excuse for inattention.

But Cornet Smith, venturing to indulge his titter, till it grew too distinguishable, called forth such a furious glance from the disconcerted soldier, that I began to tremble for the consequences. I fear, Julia, it indicated a temper irascible in no trifling degree: yet let us not be too hasty in our censure; it was a very teasing circumstance without doubt.

After supper, I observed my kind hosts in private confabulation with the hero of my story, and soon afterwards, when the party was reduced, I was graciously beckoned to partake of their conference.

“Do you know,” said Mrs. Poyntz, “that I have taken the liberty to promise

mise Captain Talbot, that you will make him some tea and coffee in the morning? He is terribly afraid," continued she, smiling, "of beginning his journey without a comfortable breakfast; and however *disagreeable* the office may be, I am sure you will not refuse to do the honours of my table in my absence, especially as you love early rising, and I do not."

I suppose there was some reluctance discernible in my countenance, for the gentleman with extraordinary gravity said, "Nay, madam, if you have the smallest objection"—

"I cannot possibly have any objection, Sir," returned I, with as much unconcern as I could assume, "to the making myself useful to Mrs. Poyntz."

"Then," cried he, seizing my hand in his, which trembled as he pressed it, "I shall once again at least"—he was interrupted by a deep sigh, and quitted

the room in a state of agitation too evident, I fear, to all whom he left in it.

I retired early to my pillow, but not to rest: the perturbation of my spirits, occasioned by the discovery of the strange and dangerous inhabitant which had gained admittance into my heart, caused such a tumult in my breast, that sleep never assailed my eye-lids. Tired of watching the dreary progress of the night, I was up before the dawn, but did not leave my chamber till my company was requested in the parlour. I cannot honestly declare that I received the summons with displeasure, but an universal tremour shook my frame, and I experienced a mixed sensation, so new and undefinable to me, that I must leave it to Montgomery in your next interview with him to explain.

Talbot's first salutation was an enquiry after my health, excited by the ravages, which want of rest and a disturbed mind had made on my complexion; a query

no less applicable to himself, and which indeed his appearance rendered equally indispensable.

"For my part," replied he, "the sleepless night I have passed, with the cruel suspense of doubtful love, are sufficient to account for the *tristeful* traces which are visible in my countenance; but I come to you as the sovereign empiric, who have life and death at your disposal."

I forced a laugh at this characteristic rhapsody, and endeavoured to seem unconscious of its allusion; but I always find it difficult to play the hypocrite, and now, I believe, performed the part more miserably than ever.

"My nostrums are very simple," returned I, "but such as they are, I think, the sooner you try their efficacy the better." Going to ring the bell as I spoke.

"Hold," cried he, "it is not a cup of chocolate or coffee, but the cup of happiness or misery, which I now expect

pect to receive from your hands ;” then leading me to a chair, and placing another by its side,

“ Miss Worthy,” continued he, “ you have too much discernment to be insensible of the passion you have inspired. Tell me, I conjure you, if a plain, honest soldier, with fortune and connections far above his deservings, may be happy enough to render himself acceptable to you? Candour and sincerity is all I ask; but I am well assured, you have too much nobleness of heart to trifle with the pain, which *it* will not enable you to relieve.”

O! Julia, I felt myself as unprepared to reply to this declaration, as if it had been wholly unforeseen. When I could speak,

“ Captain Talbot,” said I, “ you little think to whom you have addressed so flattering, so honourable a proposal. You know not, alas! that to a beggar,
a girl

a girl of obscure birth, a poor deserted foundling"—

"Spare me," interrupted he, "for Heaven's sake! I am already fully sensible that I am not conversing with a mortal of ordinary mould, and that the merit of an angel dwells not in her genealogy; but I thank you, Selima, for holding these adventitious gifts of fortune in some consideration, as they are all I have to barter for the many excellencies, which every moment discover themselves in you."

Thus he ran on; but it would be gross, intolerable egotism in me to repeat to you one half of the expressions, which an extravagant partiality dictated to his florid imagination. He would not suffer me to edge in a word that was adverse to his suit.

"If you have no regard," said I, with some difficulty, "for your own consequence, think of the claims which your family has upon you for its support.

Would

Would you be capable of wounding the breast of an anxious parent, to gratify a transient passion in your own, if you are still possessed of so near and dear a relative; or should Fate have bereft you of such a blessing, has not your uncle"—

"Forbear," said he, "to talk to me with this inhuman coldness; and believe me, when I swear to you, that I have not a relation to whose opinion I hold myself amenable in the most trifling incident of life, excepting Lord Fitzalwine; nor even to him or my father, were he still existing, should I esteem it a part of my duty to sacrifice the only prospect of future happiness the world affords: but I see I am not deemed worthy of your regard, and you would avail yourself of any obstacle rather than your own cruelty, to suppress my hopes."

"Indeed you misunderstand my meaning," cried I, "it is the impropriety of expressing the sentiments of my heart
which

which restrained them. O! Talbot, I could not bear the consciousness of rendering myself more unworthy of you than I am already."

"Unworthy of me!" repeated he, seizing my hand and kissing it—"If I knew not how superior your soul is to affectation—O! that I could procure a mirror, which would reflect the mind; or that I had the power to make you see yourself with the same eyes, with which you behold—the pigmy merits of the world in general.—No,"—casting himself at my feet, "I swear by all the powers"—"Hold," interrupted I, "if you wish me to credit the sincerity of your professions, you must not swear.—You have just now said, that I was superior to affectation; and in order to confirm the honourable opinion in your mind, I am going to confess to you, that my heart is a powerful advocate in your favour, though my reason forcibly opposes its dictates, and forbids me to sacrifice
the

the honour and consequence of the man I esteem" (and I am afraid, an impertinent tear started from my eye, as I spoke) "for the gratification of a presumptuous passion, which perhaps I am very culpable in having permitted to take place:—Hear me, said I," observing his impatience to confute my arguments—"You know, I am the child of charity; that I exist but on the bounty of the humane: consequently, though without relations, I am not destitute of friends—friends, to whom I owe more than filial gratitude and submission; to them therefore I shall refer your suit, and submit myself entirely to their disposal."

"Agreed," cried Talbot, in an ecstasy, concluding, I suppose, that he should find it easier to overcome the scruples of the old lady, than those of the young one.

"Mrs. Poyntz, I am sure, will have the compassion to patronize my cause."

"Yes,"

“ Yes,” returned I, smiling, “ I think you have taken care to establish your interest in that quarter, if I may so term the promotion of a suit, which is so inimical to it in the literal sense of the word. But though I am highly indebted to Mrs. Poyntz for many friendly and polite attentions, it is not from her that I am to expect the decision of my future fate. There is a woman to whom”—

“ Where?” eagerly demanded my volatile swain, “ tell me where she is to be found, and if before tomorrow night I do not return favoured with the approbation of my wishes”—

“ What! and leave your uncle, the borough, and the seat in parliament, in the lurch !”

Dear Talbot, restrain this impetuosity of temper. I hope for the return of Mrs. Leslie in a few days at farthest; in all probability it will precede your own,

and I would have you somewhat acquainted with each other before she is informed of so irrefragable an instance of your folly, particularly *as prejudices are not easily overcome you know.*"

"If you persist thus in abusing yourself, hang me if I do not take an effectual method to silence you," cried he; and I verily believe the wretch would have had the assurance to snatch a kiss from my lips, had I not sprang to the bell, and rang for breakfast in a hurry; nor did it arrive before it was highly necessary to mitigate the raillery which our long and private conference naturally incurred. The family was up, and I had scarcely poured out the tea before they joined us. My morning visitor soon afterwards retired to his lodgings, to prepare for his journey, but with such a look of satisfaction, that Mr. Poyntz observed, that the lady had not been inexorable, adding that it were
a reflexion

a reflection indeed on Miss Worthy's taste to conceive such a possibility, when so fine and amiable a young man was in the case.

I protest, Julia, though much confused by the insinuation, I could have hugged him for the compliment which accompanied it: had he called me a Venus, he would not have pleased me half so well. I have been used to think Mr. Poyntz not possessed of a very extraordinary understanding, but there may be a great deal of sound judgment, unattended with any particular brilliancy of parts.

Such is the present posture of affairs in the wonderful memoirs of the most wonderful Selima Worthy; and indeed I have often thought some of Cupid's machinery was only wanting for the fabrication of a modern novel.

On my guardian's determination, my hopes and fears at present rest; it is

that consideration that sustains my spirits : had I but my own judgment to direct me, my heart must break, for it would never permit the encouragement of my presumptuous hopes. Hers will be more indulgent, I know it will, and I cannot fear the commission of an error, when acting beneath its sanction.

Mrs. Poyntz following me into my dressing-room this morning, tenderly interrogated me as to the intentions of Captain Talbot ; “ His behaviour,” said she, “ has been very particular, and I hope his conversation with you to day has been unequivocal.”

“ Perfectly so,” I replied, deeply blushing, with my eyes cast upon the floor.

“ I give you joy,” said she, “ such an alliance would gratify the pride of the first family in the kingdom.”

“ Alas ! my dear madam,” said I, “ that is my only objection, for as to himself” —

“ Pshaw,

“ Pshaw, pshaw, do not be a romantic simpleton, and refine away your happiness ; what signifies talking of himself, he is a charming man to be sure, but were he an Æsop, the power of making his wife a countess would be sufficient to counterbalance all his deformities.”

Such is the force of wealth and grandeur, even upon the mind of a sensible and amiable woman.

“ I shall submit myself implicitly,” returned I, “ as duty and gratitude demand, to the disposal of Mrs. Leslie.”

“ To be sure,” said she, “ and you had better write to her immediately.”

“ I will madam, certainly,” said I, if you think it necessary, but I expect her hourly, and I confess I would much rather converse with, than write to, her on the subject.”

“ Well, well then, there can be no impropriety,” returned she, “ in that respect ;

respect; a week or ten days can be of no consequence, especially as we know what her sentiments must be upon the occasion as perfectly as if she had declared them.

There is a Miss Dorinda Cleland just arrived on a visit to Mrs. Poyntz, to whom she is a near relation; from the glimpse I have had of her, she seems weak and romantic, but her character may improve on a nearer acquaintance.

I forgot to tell you, that a day or two after my guardian's trip to London had taken place, Colonel Audley recollected some *urgent* business, which made his attendance in the metropolis indispensable. What perseverance will effect, I know not, but the gentleman seems determined to put its influence to the proof.

Dearest Julia, farewell. This great packet, I trust, will reach you on the eve of your departure, when you will not have time to comment on its contents,

tents. Heaven bless you, and fulfil every wish of your benevolent heart, which is incapable of ridiculing the weakness of a sincere friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXL.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. V. MONTGOMERY.

THOUGH still in suspense with regard to your present situation, and doubtful whether my last letter has been received by the person for whom it was designed, I cannot feel myself the happiest fellow in the universe, without making one effort, at least, to communicate the intelligence, that thou, through the force of sympathy, may'st share in the transport of thy friend. Alas! poor soul, I wish thou wert less dependent upon others for the consolation of the heart. O! Valtimond, this divine creature

ture returns my love. A summons from my uncle, to stand candidate for the borough of —, accelerated the declaration of my passion. Not to suffer

“ Concealment, like a worm i’ th’ bud,
To prey upon *my* damask cheek,”

I was determined to know my fate before I took my leave; and thank my stars, it is not a hopeless one, though its final sentence is not yet pronounced, and is to proceed only from a widow lady, for whom, though I have never seen her, I entertain a veneration for having been the protectress of my richest treasure.

Though my presence at — was so hastily required, as I was stepping into my chaise to begin my journey, I was most agreeably surprized by the arrival of a second express, to inform me, that it was no longer necessary. Lord Fitzalwine seems to think, that my attractions here are no other than the irresistible charms

charms of his youngest daughter ; and, not to interrupt the progress of his darling scheme, has had me elected by proxy.

In the evening, I made my unexpected appearance at a rout, to which I knew Selima was engaged, and either saw, or had the vanity to imagine I saw, pleasure sparkle in her eyes, though I plainly perceived she wished to contract her features into a frown of reproof, for my disobedience to the commands of my uncle, which she had just enough of the woman in her disposition to attribute to her own charms, an idea for which I rallied her not a little ; but she, with her usual vivacity and good humour, joining in the laugh against herself, defeated its force, and we chatted on indifferent subjects, till our company was called for in another room. A scheme for a little dance had been preconcerted, and to my great chagrin, my charmer's

charmer's hand had been secured on the first intimation of such a plan.

"Only think how provoking!" said she, "I had but just engaged myself to dance with Sir Edward Foster, before you came into the room."

"Hang him," said I, "never mind him. Dance with me, and let him find a partner more suitable to himself."

"Pshaw, Talbot," cried she, "you vex me by such extravagances; if you would involve yourself in a quarrel, I trust you have more respect for me than to wish to see me guilty of so gross an incivility."

"Well then, have you never a friend, to whom you can introduce me?" said I; "I do not care who the devil it is, now you are otherwise disposed of."

"O! yes," returned she, "we have a young lady with us, who is an entire stranger in Bath, and I shall be proud of providing for her so well."

And

And leading me to a pretty languishing fair one,

“ Miss Cleland !” said she, if you are disengaged, Captain Talbot, a particular friend of mine requests the honour of dancing country-dances with you.”

The favour was immediately granted : and I found my new acquaintance such an idiot, that hang me if I could help talking nonsense to her for my life, though we stood by her angelic friend all the evening, and I verily believe, at the conclusion of the visit, I left her perfectly assured of having made a conquest of my heart. Selima understood the bombast language with which I treated her, and could not forbear laughing sometimes, though she seriously chid me for making a fool of the poor girl, which I told her honestly was an offence not within my power to commit, Nature having performed that task so effectually already. I was vexed at myself, however, upon reflexion, and have ever since

since paid her as moderate a share of attention as common civility would allow. What temptation can there be indeed to bestow a thought on such an insignificant in the presence of Miss Worthy? but the *sang froid* of my heart has not served to shield me from the susceptibility of hers. Not content with sighing and ogling at me to no purpose, yesterday morning, as my hair was dressing, I received a pathetic *billet-doux*, signed Sacharissa, appointing a meeting with her beloved Philander, in the evening, at Spring-Gardens. Little suspecting the writer of it of so gross an infringement of the laws of female delicacy, and making it a point to return all tender tokens with the warmth they deserve, I gave it to Peter, bidding him to put it in the fire, but having a book in my hand, I did not particularly observe with what punctuality my orders were obeyed, and the fellow casting his eyes upon the words, “ Ten thousand pounds at my

own disposal," and afterwards an arbour in an obscure walk, mentioned as the place of rendezvous, thought it would be good fun, as he has since expressed himself, in his defence, to try for once if he could not pass for his master. Accordingly, in an old suit of my clothes, he did me the favour to accept the invitation in my stead, and actually, or at least, as he himself affirms, with his horrible long phiz and lank jaws, under favour of the night, together with his croaking voice (which he accounted for by complaining of a bad cold and hoarseness) had the address to persuade this enterprizing damsel to elope with him to France, that land of independence, where he was to be made master of all her independent charms.

"And what the devil," said I, "did you intend to do, when day-light should arrive, and discover the impostor, for I presume you did not expect to personate
me

me then as well as you had done in the dark?"

"No, Sir," returned he, "I *knowed* that was impossible, because the young lady was acquainted with you, but I thought I might still make her believe I was a gentleman, and that in such a situation she would be glad to marry any one."

I stared at the fellow's impudence, which certainly must be unparalleled by any thing on earth, except the romantic folly by which it was provoked.

In short, this curious design, if the hero of it is to be believed, and he deserves credit as much as the heroine I think, would soon have been put in execution, had not Sachariffa's Abigial (confidante I should say) not fortified against the cold air by the celestial flame which animated the breast of her gentle mistress, condescended to avail herself of a good kitchen fire in the adjacent inn, round which were some brethren of the

comb, with whom Peter had been regaling and drinking to the success of his amour, every circumstance of which, in the pride of his heart, he freely communicated, excepting only the awkward mistake of the note being addressed to another person. These jovial bucks soon forgot the promise of secrecy in which they had bound themselves, and could not refrain from rallying the poor girl on the extraordinary taste of her fair lady, who was no sooner apprized of the plot, than, with a spirit which did her honour, she flew to discover the impostor ; and though followed by all the men, who wished to prevent the ill consequences of their volubility, boldly effected her purpose ; but unhappily, in exposing the disguised knight, the identity of poor Dorinda Cleland was as publicly made known.

In this miserable plight, the poor female Quixote, disappointed of her lover, and her journey to the continent, had
no

no resource left but to return to the place from whence she came ; where, as the family supped out, she had a good opportunity to ruminate on the blessed consequences of the heroic adventure in which she had embarked ; but instead of reflection exciting any contrition for her ill conduct, it roused such a fiend-like spirit of revenge, that in order to exculpate herself, and throw the blame on my shoulders, she fabricated such a train of confounded lies, that to my great astonishment, when I called in the Circus this morning, I was refused admittance, though perfectly convinced at the same time, that the family were at home. Conscious as I was of my own innocence, my pride took the alarm at such an unmerited rebuke, and, for the instant, resentment predominated in my breast. But I have already confessed to you, that since almighty love has obtained a sovereignty in my mind, my spirit has been greatly humbled ; where-

fore by the commands of this powerful potentate who suggested to me, how much the affair might have been misrepresented to my disadvantage, I took up my pen, and wrote something to the following effect :—

TO MISS WORTHY.

HAVING just made a fruitless attempt to pay my devoirs, where they have before been so fortunate as to meet with a gracious reception, I am inclined to suppose, that some of the many, who are envious of my happiness, have availed themselves of the extraordinary event of last night, to throw unjust aspersions on my character : this I am inclined to suppose, as I can suppose any thing rather than caprice and inconsistency in yours. For mercy's sake, suffer me to speak to you; and in five minutes I will convince you, that the whole town was acquainted with the affair, before I knew
a syllable

a syllable about it. Do not misinterpret this eagerness to vindicate myself into a consciousness of guilt; for upon my honour and conscience, nothing but the most extravagant passion or (to express myself more properly) a passion for an object, whose value is inestimable, to such a solicitation under the present circumstances could ever have bent the proud heart of yours eternally,

HENRY TALBOT.

This note was immediately answered by Mrs. Poyntz, and Miss Worthy's compliments to Captain Talbot, acquainting him, that they were at home and should expect the honour of his company.

Stung again with the coldness of this permission, yet unable to resist the temptation it conveyed, I once more presented myself in the Circus, though in a state of mind more calculated to plunge me into a real than to clear me from an imaginary

imaginary offence. But I looked on Selima, and chagrin was banished from my breast. Affliction, unmixed with anger, had thrown a melancholy tenderness over her brow; and that eye, where concern not pity “tipp’d the pointed beam with treble softness” must have touched the heart of the most frigid anchorite. I have often wondered, Valtimond, that it never entered the prolific brain of any of the sublime geniuses of antiquity to create a direct antithesis to the preposterous table of the Gorgon’s-head; but a Selima Worthy was not born to grace that poetical era, or it would not have required much stretch of fancy to conceive the idea of stocks, stones and statues being animated by the enchanting countenance of a lovely woman.

As I crossed the hall, I was met by a most emblematic figure of one of the Furies. Miss Cleland, to avoid an interview with a man, whom she must have
 had

had the impudence of Belzebub to confront, was retiring hastily to her own apartment ; and I could not help bowing to her with a sarcastic smile of thanks for the happiness she had intended me, as I passed.

Mrs. Poyntz was violently strenuous in support of the reputation of her kinswoman ; of which she had herself been so shamefully neglectful.

“ Good God ! madam ” said I, irritated beyond all patience at the undeserved acrimony of her expressions ; “ if it were not the easiest thing upon earth to clear myself even of all knowledge of the transaction which you accuse me of.”

“ Indeed,” said Selima, who sat pensively with her work in her hand, on the other side of the table, “ indeed Captain Talbot, I shall be most painfully disappointed, if you do not : yet surely my heart could not continue to feel for a man who could be capable of the shameful

shameful duplicity which has been al-
 leged against you."

"My beloved Miss Worthy," cried I, "I am sure you have too much generosity of soul, to give up to the machinations of his enemies, a man who lives but to adore you. Heavens! could I entertain a thought of any other woman, whilst all that is charming in her sex"—

"You must at least acknowledge," interrupted she, "that you have been very censurable in giving Miss Cleland any reason to suppose you beheld her with a preference, which you did not feel. You cannot have forgotten your behaviour to her at Mrs. Sandford's rout."

"I have not," said I, "and in that, and that alone, I confess I have been highly culpable; for from that moment, aware of its impropriety, I have invariably treated Miss Cleland with a re-
 spect

spect as distant as her connection with this family would permit."

"And can you confidently deny," demanded Mrs. Poyntz, "that you have ever written to the girl?"

"Written to her!" reiterated I with inexpressible astonishment, "as I hope for the mercy of Heaven, and of this sweet delegate of its benignity, I have not. Is it possible that any one can have dared to assert so infamous a falsehood?"

"The young lady has herself made such an insinuation," returned Miss Worthy, "though I honestly declare to you, it was attended to with very little credit on my part."

"No, no," cried Mrs. Poyntz, *your* incredulity may be easily accounted for," with an air of spleen, for which I think I shall scarcely ever be able to forgive her, for it called forth a look of distress in the expressive eyes of her beauteous friend, which pierced me to the heart.

In short, I found myself in the most
awkward

awkward situation that ever poor innocent fellow experienced; and so I told them.

“ To vindicate myself at the expence of a woman’s fame, is not the part of a man of gallantry, of a soldier,” said I, “ yet to live under the pain of your displeasure, when I am totally unconscious of deserving it, is almost enough to force me into a real error, to avoid the consequences of an imaginary one. I can only swear to you, that I was with a particular friend of mine, Mr. Sutherland, at whose lodgings I supped at the time when the curious interview in Spring Gardens took place; and was totally ignorant of the whole affair, till that gentleman called upon me the next morning, and related every circumstance of it, with which common report had furnished him, as the true hero of it was throwing about the cups and saucers on my breakfast-table. I had before remarked his trepidation, but without surprise,

prize, as I have been once or twice on the eve of discharging him for want of sobriety. Though Sutherland was uncertain to whom the eclat of the adventure belonged, poor Peter's conscience became his accuser; his courage totally forsook him, and falling upon his knees, he made a full confession of the extraordinary enterprize in which he had the audacity to engage. "But though my valet has done me the honour to use *my* character as his own," said I, "I hope you, madam, will not have the cruelty to burthen me with the infamy of *his*."

"O!" said Mrs. Poyntz, with indignation, "do not think to persuade me, that the fellow would have the temerity to enter into such a project, unless encouraged in it by his master: and give me leave to tell you, Captain Talbot, that seducing the affections of a young lady of family and fortune, when under a serious engagement with another, and afterwards making the indis-

cretion into which your own duplicity had enticed her, the sport of your servants, is an exploit which never can rebound to your honour."

This was an imputation I had not the philosophy to brook; indeed, thou hast been "seven of the nine days out of wonder already," that my temper has so long deported itself with decency and decorum. Place the reformation, I pray thee, on its true foundation, that sweet, subjugating passion, by which the bravest have been subdued. Even in this instance, I restrained all testimony of my anger to the quiet reproof of a silent bow; then turning to her, to whom I can even sacrifice a spirit otherwise uncontrollable.

"And have these honourable sentiments with which Mrs. Poyntz so generously regards me, infused themselves into your breast also, Miss Worthy?" said I; "am I so truly miserable as to appear

appear in your eyes the despicable wretch I have heard myself described?"

"Indeed," replied she, with all the sweets of Hybla flowing from her lips, "I do not feel myself inclined to condemn you on mere presumptive evidence; on the contrary, my heart acquits you, but my esteem for you is of such a nature, that I cannot be happy till the world is equally convinced of your innocence."

"Then it shall be so," returned I, "to whatever humiliations I am reduced; you, madam," once more condescending to address myself to Mrs. Poyntz, "and all the world shall be convinced, that Miss Worthy has not lavished her good opinion on a villain. I have only to step for Frank Sutherland, who can happily prove so clear an alibi in my favour." I believe I forgot to mention to you, his having been in Bath about a fortnight, for the removal of a rheumatic pain, which has tormented

him for some time. It appears somewhat ungrateful, having passed over a circumstance unnoticed, from which I have derived much gratification: his company, always acceptable, has, at this juncture, been particularly opportune; though I must confess, a married man is but a sleepy confidante for one in love. But to return to my trial:

“That would only be to confirm,” replied my prejudiced judge, “the most wanton piece of cruelty your whole conduct has exhibited.”

“Will you give me leave,” said my gentle advocate, “since I am not ashamed to own myself deeply interested in the event, to request that Miss Cleland may be made a sharer in the present conference? Since you will not hear the defence of the accused, the accuser ought at least to be obliged to support her allegation.”

“I fear it will be impossible,” said the other; “the poor child will never
be

be able to support the presence of the man by whom she has been treated with so inhuman an indignity."

Thus did I stand to hear myself unjustly vilified, with a degree of patience which surprized myself; but then to have my cause pleaded with a voice so melodious, a manner so elegant, and a judgment so refined, my spirit must have been irascible indeed, had it not been quieted by so powerful a charm.

"Perhaps," said she, "you may accuse me of inhumanity for urging the request, but whoever has been the principal aggressor, Miss Cleland, without doubt, has taken a very active part in the aggression; and though custom may not permit a gentleman to be as tenacious of reputation as a young lady, yet I trust from the tender friendship with which you have honoured me, that you will not sacrifice my future peace entirely, who you know have not committed any offence to incur such a penalty,

nalty, to spare your own relations a momentary and a merited mortification; though be assured, I feel sincerely for the distressed situation in which she has involved herself; but I feel more acutely for Captain Talbot, whose character, I firmly believe, has been most falsely and illiberally aspersed." Is she not an angel, Valtimond?

Mrs. Poyntz in reply said,

"To prove, Miss Worthy, that your happiness is dear to me in proportion with your merit, Miss Cleland shall be called, and whatever she may suffer in the interview, your perfect information shall not be neglected."

On which the bell was rung, and Miss Cleland's company solicited; but, alas! her nerves were not able to sustain themselves against the shock of such a message; the immediate consequences of which were nothing less than hysteric fits, of so violent a nature, that her shrieks

shrieks were heard almost all over the house.

I cannot say this sudden indisposition wrought any great degree of compassion in my breast. It even seemed rather to stagger than confirm the credulity of her zealous friend ; and the dear Selima, still bent on the vindication of my honour, begged that her maid might be interrogated. But this request renewed the ravings of the mistress, who grasped the woman's hand, and tore her clothes if she made the least effort to depart from her side.

Mrs. Poyntz, incensed at length by such outrageous behaviour, thought proper to remonstrate with the invalid, who, in order to avoid meeting a man in whose eyes she must be sensible she had rendered herself truly ridiculous, confessed, after all, that, excepting the occurrences of Mrs. Sandford's assembly, I never gave her any reason to suppose I entertained for her the smallest degree

degree of partiality—That the signature of the letter was a fictitious one, and the hand-writing her servant's; consequently I had no reason to suppose the appointment was from her. Mrs. Poyntz delayed not to transmit to me this information, with many polite apologies for the injustice into which she had been betrayed; and I immediately, through her hands, restored the curious epistle (delivered to me by Peter when I discharged him) which had been the origin of so much altercation, to the fair damsel, who is to live retired in her own apartment till some plausible excuse presents itself for her return into the country. She will, I hope, in future, take care to be better acquainted with the sentiments of her knight, before she advances so far in search of an adventure.

Thus ends the history of my indictment, trial, and honourable acquittal; by which I trust, though it might have had a very different conclusion, I am not

at all degraded in the ingenuous bosom of the beauteous Selima, and by which, if possible, she has been rendered still more estimable to mine. Yet I love to teaze the little witch now and then, particularly when I can contrive to steal some inadvertent testimony of her regard, which she would be too prudish voluntarily to display.

The other night a little locket, which I picked up on the high-road a great while ago, and have worn ever since, happened to slip from under my waistcoat; and observing that it excited a look of curiosity, I was mischievous enough to kiss it with an impassioned air, and with a deep sigh replaced it, pensively, in its former station. This little incident was observed by Selima with a transient gravity, which it was almost a sin to have occasioned: but jealousy is such an irrefragable proof of love, that it is the sweetest balsam to the senses of a lover. But I have
since

since suffered so cruel a retaliation, that I have little reason to exult in my manoeuvres.

The other day, presuming on the tender friendship existing between us, I ventured to inquire of Selima, if she wore her sable dress in consequence of the loss of any beloved friend.

“ Indeed I do,” said she, bursting into tears; “ deeply have I mourned, and ever shall continue to lament the loss of two of the most valuable friends that ever gracious Heaven bestowed for the protection of a helpless orphan—the most beneficent of women, and most honourable of men.”

“ Indeed!” said I, “ and was the gentleman young and handsome, as he was amiable?”

“ He was young, generous and noble—the friend of distressed innocence.”

“ Indeed!” repeated I, the tawny fiend already taking possession of my breast, “ and may I not be indulged with

with the name of this noble, generous, this beloved young man?"

"His name was Taylor," returned she.

"Not Taylor, surely, of the — regiment, who was killed in a duel, in June?" demanded I in astonishment.

"The same," replied she.

"Heavens and earth! — noble! generous! the friend of distressed innocence! As I hope to be saved, a more despicable reptile never breathed, or met with a fate more truly merited, than when he fell by the well-directed arm of an injured husband. Since, madam, such a fellow as Taylor has been thought worthy of your affection — for my part, I — I — I" — in short, I know not what I would have said, or what dreadful sentence I might not have called upon myself, had not my rage fortunately stopped my utterance, and preserved me from its own effects, which for life I might have deplored.

"Captain

“ Captain Talbot,” said Miss Worthy, with a dignified resentment, “ I will not hear you depreciate the character of a man, whose memory I am in duty bound to venerate and esteem : and suffer me now seriously to inform you, that if you consider the affection which I cherish for the ashes of my departed friends, as incompatible with that which I have candidly acknowledged for yourself, I must endeavour to accomplish such a resignation as my conscience cannot disapprove, however my heart may be tortured in the attempt.

Were you acquainted with my melancholy history (if the love you profess for me is sincere) your gratitude would be added to mine for the kindness I have received.”

“ Then condescend to relate it to me,” said I, “ and dispel every possibility of doubt.” “ No, Talbot, I feel that I deserve your confidence, and I expect to be favoured with it,” returned she.

she. “ If I know my own heart, it is incapable of inflicting on yours a wound such as I now feel, and which you only could have taught me to endure.”

With these heart-rending expressions she quitted the room, leaving me in a state of anguish and remorse, at that instant undescribable, though greatly aggravated in the evening, when I met Mrs. Poyntz in public, unattended by her fair friend, who, she told me, was confined with a bad head-ache. You may possibly imagine better than I can describe, the miserable night I lingered through; but I was more fortunate in the morning; and, when I called in the Circus, was graciously permitted to behold the beloved arbiters of my fate, who accepted of my concessions with benignity, far superior to my deserts, and once more reinstated in her favour, I pray most fervently that some protecting power will deign to regulate my impetuous spirit, and shield me from a re-

newal of my offence. Yet I wish with all my soul, I could get this infernal fellow out of my head, or that Selima would explain by what means he arrived at the unmerited dignity of being stiled her venerated and lamented friend. But the return of her guardian from London is the wished-for æra from which I expect the completion of my felicity.

No letter yet approaches me from the Continent ; and as I am utterly at a loss how to direct to you, mine must take up its abode in my escritoire, till the scribbling humour seizes your worship. By the bye, I fear this neglect of the quill is not an omen of the existence of the tender passion in your breast ; for since I have been in love, pen, ink, and paper have ranked with me amongst the most essential necessaries of life.

* * *

At length your packet is arrived ; I thank you for it with much gratitude, and freely own that it amply compensates

fates for the impatience with which it had been so long expected.

I am glad you received my former scrawl before you quitted Florence, or the contents of this would have been enigmatical, and I must have recapitulated the whole story for their solution, which would not have been *selon mon gout*. Moreover, I am not a little rejoiced, that your perambulations have now bent their progress towards the white cliffs of Albion, to whose peaceful shore may Heaven

“Speed you weel.”

Perhaps you may learn some tidings of my mother in your route. If they are such as a son can hear without pain and confusion, transmit them to me; if otherwise, as I have too much reason to apprehend, I know thy friendship will spare me the communication.

I fear my credit will suffer much in the opinion of Miss Worthy, when she

knows that I have still a parent ; a parent, whom I could not, without a blush — nay, a parent in short, whom to her I found it impossible to acknowledge, and by whose ill conduct I had been reduced to the meanness of an evasion ; but you are well acquainted with the cruelty of my situation in this particular instance. It is a topic that unmans me, yet in relinquishing it I shall not revert to one much calculated for consolation. Lady Fitzalwine and her fair daughters feel themselves grievously scandalized by the partiality, which I have never attempted to disguise, for a creature of no birth, and have thought proper to favour me with a severe lecture on the subject, to which you will readily believe I did not reply with all the calmness of a philosopher. Since then, I have received a letter from my uncle, expatiating on the folly and meanness of such an unequal alliance, but couched in such terms as to have a very different effect upon my feelings.

feelings. But that you may form an accurate judgment of his sentiments, you will find it with a copy of my answer, encreasing the bulk of this; and I flatter myself, that you will approve of the steadfast, and, at the same time, respectful, manner, in which I have asserted the privileges of the heart. Yours, affectionately,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER CXLI.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

I RECEIVED, as you predicted, your superlatively welcome epistle, replete as it was with *utter indifference*, on the eve of our departure from Westburne-lodge; and though I have not had much time to comment on the contents, have considered them sufficiently to congratulate myself on the promised felicity of my friend; and though I am far from doubting, yet I long for the ratification of Captain Talbot's hopes, from the lips of your kind guardian, whose word alone can remove the fastidious scruples
of

of her prudish ward, and prove to her, that it is but a venial fault at least to accept the addresses of a fine, handsome, amiable young man, endowed with all the good things ambition could desire, and in whose favour the heart is deeply interested.

Notwithstanding the certainty of Mrs. Leslie's sentiments, with respect to so desirable an alliance, I wish you had not delayed the communication, which, from its consequence to your future happiness, her tender affection, and maternal love, indubitably demanded in its earliest infancy, and I fear, she will think herself treated with an ungrateful inattention by the beloved child, whom she has adopted, when she finds herself the last of her friends entrusted with the situation of her heart.

But I sincerely hope, that by her arrival and benovolent concurrence with all your wishes, you will be fully empowered to dissipate my fears in your
next,

next, which may be in part accounted for, by the feeble state in which I am now writing.—O! my dear girl, surely of all bodily ailments, sea-sickness is the most distressing. Though we set sail with a fair wind and good weather, we had scarcely left the harbour, before the atmosphere changed its aspect, and the waves rose to a mountainous height. I cannot give you the faintest idea of my terror at that tremendous moment, though the sailors declared repeatedly, that there was no danger: their assurances availed little towards the removal of my fears. But the cruel disorder, from which I am yet far from being perfectly recovered, soon chased away every idea of suffering death by any less excruciating torments. My father experienced its fury almost in a similar degree; but it was an evil which he was very desirous to encounter, expecting it to be succeeded by the most salutary effects on his constitution.

next

My

My little charge seems already to have received benefit from the journey, a circumstance which affords me great joy, but either from ill health or temper, he is grown so peevish, that he is a continual distress to those about him; and his frequent crying is a lamentable obstacle to his conciliating the affections of the only parent, to whom he can ever look up for protection, and parental love. I have been incessantly revolving in my mind plans for the future subsistence of his wretched mother; but the impracticability of some, discourages my hopes of rendering her any thing more than mere temporary assistance, which my father's liberality well enables me to perform.

You will oblige me much, by procuring for me the good counsel of Mrs. Leslie, in this distressing exigence, in which I am greatly perplexed how to conduct myself.

Write

Write soon, and direct for me at
Messrs. ~~Montgomery~~, *en la Rue de* ~~la~~ Paris.

They are my father's correspondents,
and will receive all our letters, whilst
we continue to be birds of passage.

I know not whereof, but I feel my-
self, if possible, more than ever interested
in the events of your life, an avowal
which I know you will be saucy enough
to laugh at, and ascribe to the account
of sympathy in the new sensations of
your heart. Well, as you are acquainted
with the state of mine, how could you
have the cruelty to refer me to a meet-
ing with Mr. Montgomery, for an ex-
planation of your feelings.—Tantalizing
girl!—surrounded by every flattering
prospect, which this world has to pre-
sent, play not, I intreat you, with the
weakness of your less-enviable friend,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CXLII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

MY dear girl, it is not in language to express the delight, with which I received your letter, which a thousand circumstances conspired to render even more valuable than any of its predecessors. In the first place, it convinced me, that the friend of my heart had escaped an element formidable as it is uncertain, and that even the monster seasickness, with its utmost fury, was unable to terrify the image of an absent sister from her mind. In the next—indeed I fear I am infected by a ridiculous

lous

lous, romantic girl, whose arrival, I think, I had just an opportunity to announce to you in my last, and who has been polite enough to furnish me with some curious anecdotes for the embellishments of the present; but this blind deity, as I was going to observe, works strange revolutions in the human mind, and has so metamorphosed mine, which was used to take every thing in its plainest form, that it has acquired the faculty of magnifying every incident, which happens within my sphere of action, into the importance of an adventure, which calls for the participation of a bosom-friend; so that your correspondence, which was ever precious, is now more estimable to me than ever. Though Miss Cleland is most singularly calculated for the confidante of a first attachment, and might have served to relieve you from the burthen of my sighs and lamentations (for according to my former acquaintance, Miss Lucy Gregg's definition of the
flame,

flame, lovers whether fortunate or otherwise, are under an indispensable obligation to groan and complain of their miserable fate) but alas ! our interests happened so untowardly to clash with each other, that I was entirely precluded the advantages, which, from the sympathy of soul apparent between us, I vainly flattered myself I might derive. In a word, she fell violently in love with Talbot at first sight, and after having communed with her pillow, and her maid, for a whole melancholy week, heroically resolved to be no longer shackled in the ignoble fetters, which prudence and female delicacy would impose, boldly dictated a letter to the unconscious knight, with an assignation to meet him in the dusk of the evening, in a dark harbour in Spring-gardens, signed Sacharissa.—

“ But she in vain

“ Tempted Bellerophon—the noble youth

“ Was arm'd with wisdom, constancy, and truth.”

Y

Little

Little suspecting, that this tender invitation could proceed from a woman, whose character required the smallest consideration, after having read it carelessly over, he gave it to the servant who was dressing his hair, to burn: but the man (as it appears) having more gallantry than his master, thought it a pity that the young lady should be disappointed of her amour, and generously took upon himself the part of the latter. The imposition, however, was discovered time enough to prevent a premeditated elopement taking place.

But in short, this droll affair has afforded such general conversation, that I am tired to death of the subject, and at first, being an inmate of the same house with its heroine, looked as foolish, as if I had been connected with her in the frolic.

Poor Mrs. Poyntz felt herself at this juncture much incommoded with her guest, who had made her character too conspicuous

conspicuous any more to partake of the amusements of this place, either with pleasure or propriety: yet to send her home again in the first fortnight, when she came to make a visit of two months, no plausible pretext could be formed; but as one person is often benefited by the misfortunes of another, the dangerous illness of a near relation, has liberated the poor damsel from a life of penance, but little accordant to her disposition; and she, this morning, took leave of a family, to which she had contrived to render her absence far more desirable than her company.

Mrs. Leslie is not yet returned; nor in her last letter could she name the time, with any certainty, when her business would permit her to leave London, but authorized us hourly to expect her arrival till it happened: when I inconsiderately adopted that foolish reserve, which your judicious observations have represented in its proper light, I did not ex-

pect to be reduced to the practice of it many days. Since then a fortnight has elapsed, and I can neither write to, nor hear from, the dear preserver of my life, without a keen remorse from the consciousness of a concealment, for which, I blush to acknowledge, I have not any rational excuse.

But as I now am in daily hopes of an opportunity to confess all my weakness in my own way, the anticipation of a few hours only (as I am willing to persuade myself) cannot make much difference in her sentiments, which are never wont to be severe. She knows her Selima too well to expect perfection in her judgment, though well assured, I trust, of the sincere affection of her heart. I told you she had deprived me of the watch, which she kindly bestowed upon me; and which I parted with reluctantly, as being a token of her love: but such is the unbounded munificence of this dear woman, that I relinquished it, but for
the

the possession of a jewel of more worth. Two days ago, on opening a parcel directed for me in a strange hand, I was most agreeably surprized by an excellent likeness of herself, set in the form of a *fausse montre*, and surrounded with brilliants of great value.—

“ For her bounty

“ There *is* no Winter in’t ; an Autumn ’tis

“ That *grows* the more by reaping.”

But how will you be surprized, when I inform you, that I have no longer any occasion to impose upon myself the task of revealing a secret, the existence of which is no more. Not half an hour ago I parted with Talbot in such a rage, that I almost vowed never to speak to him again. But to proceed methodically, and bring you regularly step by step, to the event which has provoked my displeasure.

A day or two ago, as I was coming out of a milliner’s shop, a little ragged girl accosted me in the most pitiful tone, say-

ing, that " her daddy died but last week, that her mammy was almost dead too, and that she was the eldest of nine babes, who were all starving with hunger." I cannot say I was at first much inclined to give ear to this melancholy tale, framed, as I supposed, merely for the purpose of exciting charity ; and putting a sixpence into the child's hand, was walking away inconsiderately, till the idea luckily occurred to me, that though it was probable it might be false, it was far from impossible that it should be founded upon facts, and in such a case how unpardonably should I have neglected a duty, which I, perhaps, of all human beings, am under the greatest obligations to perform : I therefore called back the little miserable beggar, told her I had a mind to prove the truth of her information, and that if her mammy did not live at a great distance, I would be myself an eye-witness of her situation.

" O !

“ O! dear lady,” said the girl, with uplifted hands, “ indeed it is not far, it is but at th’ corner of t’other street. The blessing of God Almighty will light upon you. If you see my poor mammy, I am sure you will do her good.”

It was not in Nature to resist so pathetic an exhortation, and I now followed my little guide, perfectly convinced of her sincerity, whilst she, highly delighted with her success, tripped nimbly before me, often looking back with an air of anxiety, as if she feared I intended to give her the slip.

When we arrived at the corner of the street she had mentioned, which was much farther from the place where we had met than she represented it, she led me up a dark, winding stair-case, which forcibly recalled to my mind some past circumstances of my own life, wherein I was as much in need of the assistance of the humane as the present object of my concern, whom I found a wretched
spectacle

spectacle of skin and bone, lying upon a miserable bag of straw, little deserving the denomination of a bed, with covering equally comfortless in a season uncommonly severe.

But, my dear girl, not to harraßs your feelings unnecessarily with a minute description of this distressing scene, which I did every thing in my power (at least I thought so at the time) to render less deplorable.

I purchased a good feather bed, with suitable appurtenances, hired a nurse to attend the sick woman, desired an apothecary to supply her with proper medicines at my expence, and took care that the whole family should be provided with good and wholesome food.

When I returned home, I found my lover full of impatience, and greatly wondering at an absence, for which *nobody* was able to account, *every body* being well acquainted with the business which had called me out, and which they

they well knew might have been executed in ten minutes ; but his curiosity, which I did not feel the smallest inclination to appease, diverted no less than it tormented me ; and I took care not to suffer it to draw from me any confession of my morning's engagement.

To-day I seized an opportunity to walk out alone, and repeated my visit to my poor pensioners : but judge of my surprize, when I found the whole group metamorphosed, and wearing an aspect of plenty and content, for which I was but too conscious my scanty bounty was insufficient to account : for though the poor mother still continued a most pitiable invalid, and shocking to behold, (her disorder having proved to be a confirmed jaundice, not an uncommon result, I am informed, of poverty and affliction) yet she had left her bed, and was struggling to employ herself among her children, with a countenance beaming with serenity, and a revived hope
that

that Heaven would graciously spare her for the performance of the pleasing task. Her little cherubs were all clean, and new-clothed from head to foot ; and every little innocent face exhibited a picture of content and joy. This happy reverse of situation was wrought by the liberality of a young gentleman in whose family their deceased father had formerly been a servant ; and their mother dwelt on the praises of her amiable benefactor (whose name she was not permitted to disclose) with the laudable enthusiasm of a truly grateful heart. My own beat in echo to her encomiums, without knowing on whom they were bestowed ; though an envious blush bespread my cheek on having left so ample a scope for the display of his superior merit.

“ Alas ! ” exclaimed I, “ how poor have been my services, when viewed in competition with a benevolence so noble and unconfined ! ”

Eh !

“ Eh ! do not say so, my sweet young lady,” cried the good woman : “ Was it not you that saved my life, and the lives of my poor babes, who were all perishing with hunger, when your charitable hand was stretched out for our relief ?”

At these expressions, of the truth of which I could not be insensible, the tears started from my eyes. “ Heaven be praised,” said I, “ for graciously making me an humble instrument of its mercy.”

When, as I was going away, I would have slipped a trifle into the hand of one of the children,

“ Excuse me, dear madam,” said its mother, returning it with an air of diffidence, “ indeed we cannot take it : our new friend has promised us his support ; and he is as able as he is willing to keep his word : so that were I to take from you what I do not want, it would be a very great sin, as it would be robbing those

those who do. You see, madam, he has provided us with every thing necessary—All these good clothes on my poor infants are of his buying, and two of them are to go to school to-morrow—Jemmy, shew the lady your new frock.”

“ And nu foos too—see, ma’am,” said a little happy fellow about three years old, who jumped upon my knee and began of prating to me with as much familiarity as if we had been long acquainted.

“ Well, then,” said I, once more attempting to take leave of this interesting family, “ I must content myself with the inclination, whilst I have been somewhat unfairly, I think, supplanted in the power of rendering you any service.”

“ Dear madam,” said the good woman, “ there are so many poor folk who might find a blessing in your generosity”—

“ Indeed I fear so,” returned I; “ but be assured I will never more neglect

lect to secure to myself a delight of which I never was so thoroughly sensible before."

In gratifying my vanity with a minute relation of this little incident, I have had no mercy on your patience. It is now, however, approaching to its *denouement*, which happened upon the narrow staircase before mentioned, on which, as I was descending, in the "darkness," just "visible," appeared the figure of a man, in passing whom, I was obliged to make myself as small as possible, to prevent his treading on my clothes: but judge of my surprize, when he seized my hand, and, in a voice perfectly familiar to my ear, exclaimed,

"Thus gods meet gods, and jostle in the dark!"

"Upon my word," said I, "a very bright spark of Parnassian fire; and, though borrowed, so admirably well applied"—

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"I do

“ I do not wish to steal from the author the merit of the composition,” said he; “ but if you prefer an extempore, take one genuine from the poet’s lips, produced by the inspiration of your own charms.”

And if the wretch had not the audacity to catch hold of me and snatch a kiss in spite of my teeth, never trust me. But if ever I forgive him, may I—no, he shall not make me swear:—If ever I forgive him, you shall never call me a prude again: that shall be my punishment. Besides all this, it seems he is the very man who has deprived me of the pleasure of being kind to these poor people: yet it is a pretty sort of trait, I confess, in the character of a young man of fashion, in this dissipated age, to visit the sick, and be a father to the fatherless. I fear, if he is very submissive and very penitent, I shall be obliged to be merciful at last.

have

I have trifled away so much time on this foolish affair, that I have scarcely any left to make up my figure *comme il faudroit* for the dressed ball, at which I was engaged to dance with my presuming swain; but I shall see how he behaves, and conduct myself accordingly.

I seem to have a thousand smart things to say, which will, however, be in no danger of losing any of their spirit by being left to your imagination; and as for the feelings of the heart, I am never afraid of leaving to yours the interpretation of those of your ever sincere and affectionate friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXLIII.

 FROM THE SAME

TO

 THE SAME.

THOUGH it is not many hours since I dispatched to you an unconscionable packet of nothing, I am already, so "news-crammed," that without availing myself of this method of relieving my overcharged spirits, it would be in vain to hope for the blessing of repose.

I shall not, however, anticipate the most interesting passages of my history; but late as it is, having but just returned from the ball, and divested myself of my finery, shall, like a wise historiographer, suffer the incidents to drop in due

due gradations from my pen ; a task in which (if I perfectly acquit myself at this agitating juncture) I think you will own that I deserve immortal fame.

After all my protestations, would you believe, that I was merciful enough to dance with the condemned criminal ; and what was intolerably humiliating, was absolutely compelled to forgive him almost unsolicited. It was scarcely worth while to mortify myself, by way of inflicting a punishment on him, you know ; and not one trait of contrition could I discover in his saucy face. When I scolded, he laughed ; and when I looked very cross indeed, he had the assurance to declare that he would repeat the offence.

But it did not signify, the Fates were in his favour, and there were circumstances which the womb of time was speedily to bring forth, of such a nature, as to establish him so irreversibly in my esteem, gratitude, and love—but pshaw,

did I not declare this moment, that I would not anticipate the good things of my narrative, but suffer them to disclose themselves with regularity and precision?

Well, then : having danced the better half of the evening, my swain all alive, notwithstanding my menaces, which my vanity informed me must petrify him into a statue ;—as I happened to turn my head towards the bottom of the room, I received a shock, which, at the moment, seemed to threaten my own annihilation : an effect which you will easily conceive, when I tell you it was produced by suddenly beholding the identical, but much-emaciated, figure of Lord Hazleford.

“ Let me sit down,” said I to my partner, “ for I cannot stand,” and with his help I tottered to the nearest form, almost unable to speak.

Poor Talbot’s looks were strikingly expressive of the sensibility of his heart.

“ Dear

“ Dear Selima !” cried he, “ tell me what is the matter—whither shall I run for assistance ? What sudden indisposition has seized you ? You terrify me to death ; your lips shake, and your face is as pale as ashes.”

“ I have reason indeed to tremble,” returned I, “ at the sight of that detestable man.”

“ What detestable man ?” eagerly demanded he. “ Fie, fie ! it is a weakness unworthy both of yourself and me, to fear the insolence of any man, whilst I am by your side.”

“ You know not,” said I, “ the cause I have to shudder at the appearance of Lord Hazleford.”

“ Lord Hazleford !” reiterated he : “ I will hold you any wager, that I have more reason to shudder at the appearance of Lord Hazleford than you have !”

“ What do you mean ?” said I.

“ That

“ That I do not think, that you have suffered any ill effects from his gallantry ; unless the wound lies very ingeniously concealed within your heart : and to confess the truth at last, this scar across my forehead, of which I have told you some rhodomontade lies (not intending you to believe them however) of its being acquired in the field of honour, and so forth, is literally nothing more than a dishonourable testimony, that it is possible for a villain to have a steady hand.”

“ Bless me !” exclaimed I, with an emotion of anxious curiosity, “ have you ever been engaged in a duel with Lord Hazleford ? Tell me, I entreat you, what were the motives of the quarrel !”

“ If I do,” said he “ perhaps you will not think the better of me for my prowess : though, by my soul, it was occasioned by the defence of a very innocent girl.”

“ Was

“ Was it in a house in Warwick-street, that you met with her?” demanded I with increased agitation”

“ The very same,” replied he, his astonishment taking alarm from the interrogation. “ But how is it possible that you should be acquainted with any circumstance of that extraordinary affair?”

“ It is not in my power to explain myself at present,” said I, “ Get me a chair, I intreat you. I am not in a state of mind for such a place as this ; only apologise to my Chaperone, for the abruptness of my departure, and call tomorrow.

“ In the mean time, dear Talbot, be assured, it is not grief, but joy and inexpressible delight, that overpowers my senses.—You were born to be my friend, protector, and every thing that a grateful and affectionate heart can make you ;” and as I spoke, I involuntarily pressed the hand, which led me, to my breast.

breast. But at that moment, the tears gushing from my eyes, with the crowd about me, obliged me to hurry to my chair, to avoid making myself a subject of conversation for the town; but I fear the precaution was too late.—Yet was it in nature to keep a guard upon emotions so miraculously excited?

The transport of my heart, in consequence of this discovery, is far above the power of language justly to delineate.

I am no longer the murderers of my preserver, Julia, but the happy mistress of his heart. Kind Heaven, instruct me to beguile it of every pain, and impart to it every comfort with which thy mercy shall endue my own!

What should I do, were Mrs. Leslie's absence much longer protracted? O! how I long for her to partake of this unexpected aggregate of felicity; and yet in writing it, I should lose the principal pleasure of the communication.

Is

Is it not enough, that to one of my dearest friends I am confined to this cold method of expressing the feelings of my breast?

Mrs. Poyntz was prevented accompanying me to the ball by a bad cold, and, being retired at an early hour, is still unacquainted with my sudden return.

In my last letter I mentioned the subject of your petition to my guardian, to which I trust a few days will gratify me with a verbal answer, and furnish me with an excuse for soon again intruding upon you the troublesome name of your truly devoted

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CXLVI.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

DEAR Selima, I am such a voluptuary in all the good things which tender friendship can bestow, that far from satiated with heartfelt joy in the liberal participation you have already granted me in your good fortune, I am almost ashamed to confess that I have waited with the most anxious impatience for the execution of the dread menace, which, in the eventful epistle upon my table, immediately precedes the very *troublesome* and ever *unwelcome* name of Selima Worthy.

My

My dear girl, what a heavenly creature is your gallant Mars! Even his faults—(at least the only one which is prominent enough for observation) seem to be given him only in order to cast a superior lustre on his numerous merits. It is well for me, that distance secures me from the dangers of his acquaintance; for no prior claim could be able to fortify me against the cruel heart-burnings of jealousy, in witnessing the unparalleled happiness of my friend; and not possessing the enterprising genius of the fair Dorinda, I must have pined in secret and “never told my love.”

I long as much as you can do, for Mrs. Leslie to be informed of the present situation of your heart, to whom it has been obliged at length to surrender itself, and, in short, for what an honourable disposal it has been judiciously reserved.

My father is yet insensible of the total overthrow of his hopes; and I do not

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intend to subject Captain Talbot to a second rencontre, by too hasty a disclosure of the fatal news.

Our progress to this place was retarded for some days, as you will imagine, from better intelligence than any I can furnish you with, owing to the king's unfortunate effort to escape : but I can give you no more insight into the politics of this country, than if I were still a prisoner in the nursery of Westburne-lodge, sympathising with the grand monarch, in the want of nothing but liberty and friends. All that I know is, that I have suffered much terror from the universal cry of an expected invasion, from which I supposed we should not be permitted to retreat ; and that even now, though my fears, with those of other people, have subsided in the capture of the royal sufferers, such tumult and disorder still prevails, that I have yet only travelled to cement my attachment to my native soil.

Before

Before I left England, I apprised Lady Alicia of our intended tour ; and desired her to give me the meeting, under a fictitious name, and in leaving her address with Messrs. ———, to give proper orders that it should not be delivered into any hands but mine. On these conditions, I promised to exert my abilities to the utmost for her relief, and have had one interview with this miserable victim of infamy and folly. I found her in mean unfurnished lodgings, but little accordant with her rank, or the elegance to which she had been accustomed : but her pride, I fear, has not fallen with her fortune. I cannot help being doubtful, that her apparent contrition for her past conduct, is rather the instrument of her necessity, than the offspring of a sincere repentance ; but these cursory remarks will suffice to put me upon my guard ; and be assured, I will not engage in any essential plan for her future assistance, till I have made more

accurate observations on her present behaviour.

The most amiable trait I have yet witnessed in her deportment, was an earnest desire once to be permitted to embrace her infant son. There surely could be no deceit in this request. Indeed I do not think Lady Alicia's understanding is equal to any impenetrable disguise. It was not for me to refuse it, and yet many reasons concurred to make me yield to it with reluctance. Amongst the foremost of which was, the feeble and meagre figure of the poor child, which, though in some degree improved by change of air, still continues in a pitiable state, and is more calculated, I fear, to give pain than consolation to his wretched mother. It will likewise be very difficult to accomplish the design without creating some suspicion in my father's breast, as you may imagine I would not trust him to pay such a visit unaccompanied by myself; therefore till
some

some very favourable opportunity occurs, I will not hazard the attempt.

Bouvais, my *beloved* governess, lately degraded to the occupation of a servant, in which capacity I liked her rather better than in the former, renewed her acquaintance with an old flirt immediately on our arrival in this city, and this morning a priest has united them in the holy bands of wedlock; and I find myself under the necessity of looking out for somebody to supply her place, a task which, in a country where I am a total stranger, I imagine it will be difficult to perform.

We lead a very dull life: my father's spirits continue so languid, that he shrinks at the idea of society, and will not avail himself of his letters of introduction; so that my usual evening's amusement is lulling him to sleep by reading. Madame his banker's wife, and her daughters, have waited upon me, and I have been of their party to
two

two private assemblies—not of the first class, if I may presume to form a judgment of foreign manners: but I feel myself no less obliged by my attentive Chaplain, with whom I have likewise been once *a la comediæ*: but the theatres are at present miserably attended, and although from my knowledge of the French language, I can acquit myself tolerably well in conversation, it is not sufficient to enable me fully to enter into the spirit of the drama.

Spare me not any longer, I beseech you, but execute your dreadful threat with the utmost severity of your quill. Mrs. Leslie's council will be received by me with all the deference and gratitude to which it has so just a claim.

Farewell, I almost blush to acknowledge to you, though now perhaps you will have some consideration for the weakness of a friend, that sympathy in your happiness, has afforded the only alleviation to a grief, which in spite of herself

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herself obstinately adheres to the heart
of your affectionate

JULIA WESTBURNE.



END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.



